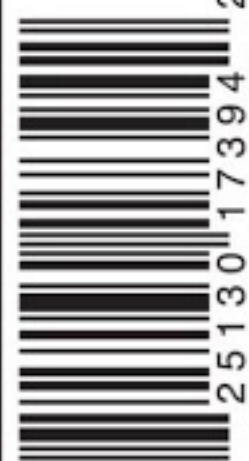


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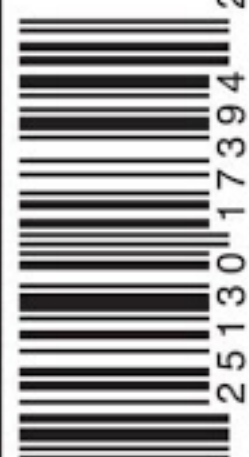
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Vinicius Andrade

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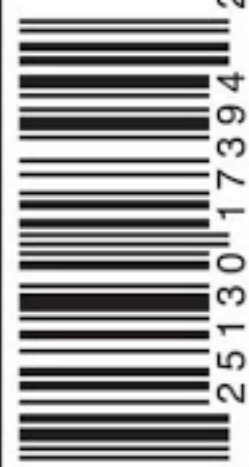
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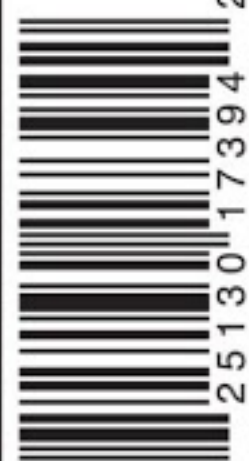
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I-90 EAST, NEAR
EPHRATA, WA.

TWO HOURS AGO.

DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE.

WHAT
DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE,
SOFIA?

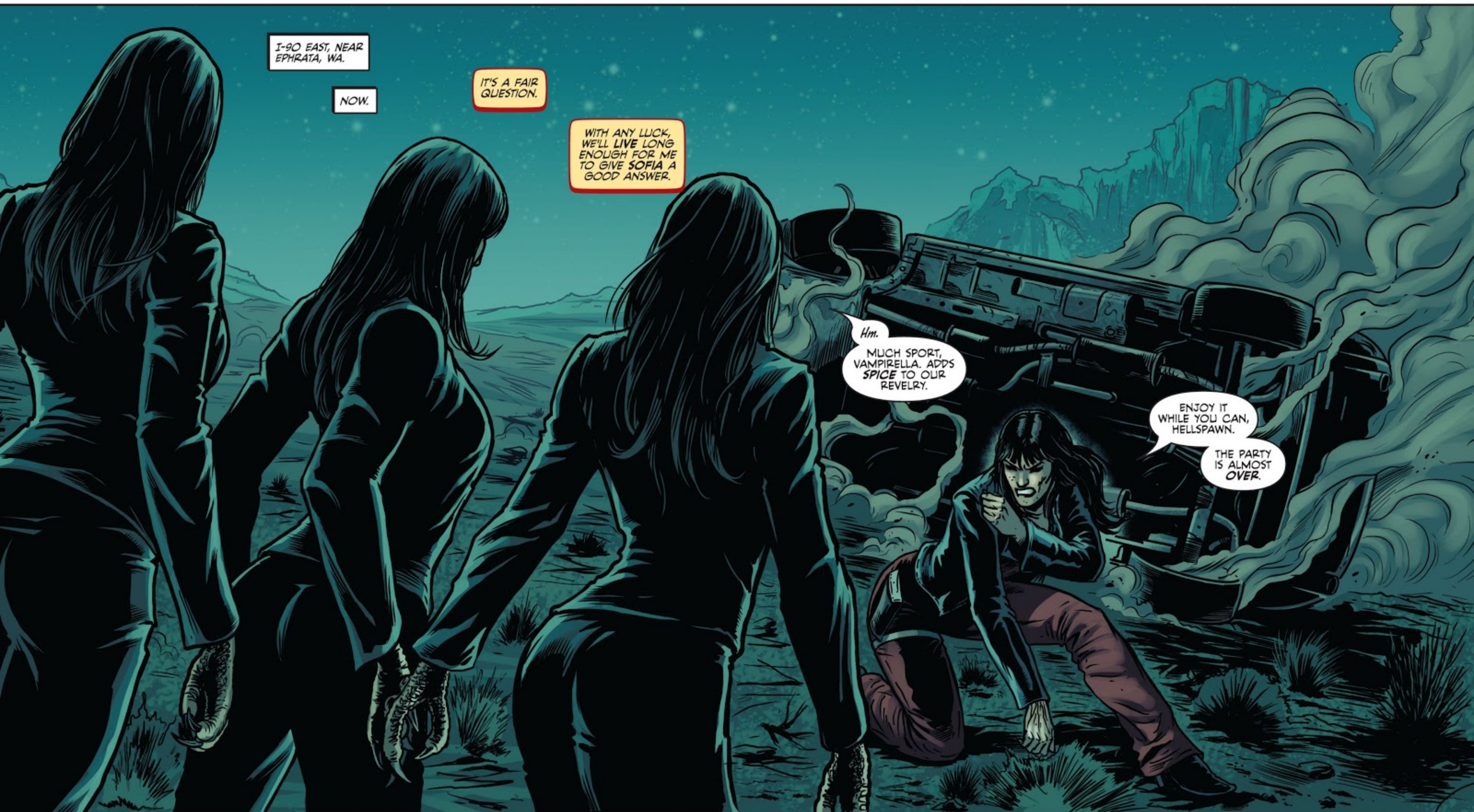
YOU'VE
GOT THE **FANGS**,
THE **BLOOD-DRINKING**
THING, THE PRETTY-MUCH-
IMPERVIOUS-TO-
DAMAGE THING.

NOT TO
MENTION THE
WHOLE **HYPNO-STARE**
WHAMMY YOU
LAID ON ME.

SO, IF YOU'RE
A **VAMPIRE**, HOW
CAN YOU BE OUT
IN THE **SUN**?

I MEAN,
AND DON'T TAKE
THIS THE WRONG
WAY, BUT
SERIOUSLY.

WHAT ARE
YOU?



I-90 EAST, NEAR
EPHRATA, WA.

NOW.

IT'S A FAIR
QUESTION.

WITH ANY LUCK,
WE'LL LIVE LONG
ENOUGH FOR ME
TO GIVE SOFIA A
GOOD ANSWER.

Hm.
MUCH SPORT,
VAMPIRELLA. ADDS
SPICE TO OUR
REVELRY.

ENJOY IT
WHILE YOU CAN,
HELLSPAWN.
THE PARTY
IS ALMOST
OVER.



Tsk.
NO WAY TO
GREET YOUR KIN,
VAMPIRELLA.



YOU
--NNNGH!--

ARE
NO KIN OF
MINE.



Hm.
INCORRECT.

MORE FAMILY
TO YOU THAN THE
SACKS OF BLOOD,
BONE AND MEAT
YOU PROTECT.

INFORMATION FROM MY... **BENEFACTORS** PUT US ON THE TRAIL OF THESE THREE.

SEVERAL BIZARRE MURDERS, LINKED BY KANJI CHARACTERS WRITTEN IN THE BLOOD OF THE VICTIMS.

WE HAVE MUCH TO THANK YOU FOR, SISTER.


YOUR BATTLE WITH THE WORM, **YAG-ATH VERMELLUS**, SOFTENED THE BARRIER BETWEEN OUR HOME AND THIS PLACE.

A MAD RUSH THROUGH THE HOLES YOU **TORE** IN THE WALL BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL.


AND **HERE** WE ARE.

AND NOW, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO **GO**.






DARK MOTHER,
I DON'T THINK
I'VE **EVER** BEEN
HIT THAT HARD.



VISION BLURRING.
HAVE TO MOVE,
STAND, FIGHT.

WHATEVER THEY
DISH OUT--



--TAKE IT.



Hm.



DAMN
THEM.

TOO PRECISE,
TOO QUICK,
THEY'RE FORCING
ME TO REACT.

MAKING
ME DANCE TO
THEIR TUNE.

BACK THEM OFF,
BUY MYSELF
SOME SPACE.

KREEEEK

REGAIN THE
INITIATIVE.

Hm.

EMBARASSING.



WE ARE
THE **KARASU**
SHIMAI.

THE
SISTERS OF
THE CROW.

ASSASSINS
FOR A **DUKE** OF
CHAOS, CURSE HIS
BLACK HEART.



AND WE
WILL **NOT**
BE DENIED
OUR SPORT,
SISTER.



THIS IS GOING
TO BE...
CHALLENGING.

GET
READY.

THEY MOVE LIKE
MACHINES,
PERFECTLY
SYNCHRONIZED.



GET
READY...



A COLLECTIVE
MECHANISM BUILT
TO OVERWHELM
AN ENEMY.



READY...

EFFECTIVE...



SOFIA!

...BUT ALSO
PREDICTABLE.

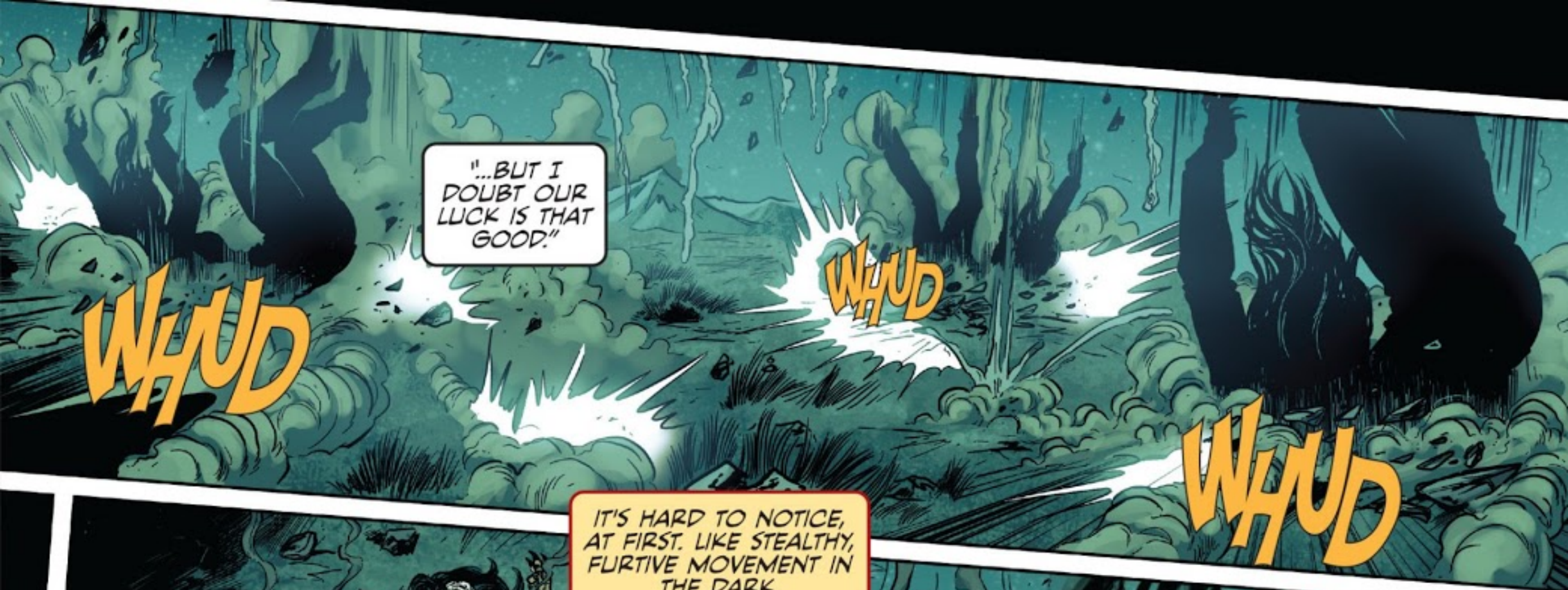




RUNNING NOW
DON'T LOOK
BACK

GOD
DAMN.
ARE THEY...
ARE THEY
DEAD?

MAYBE...



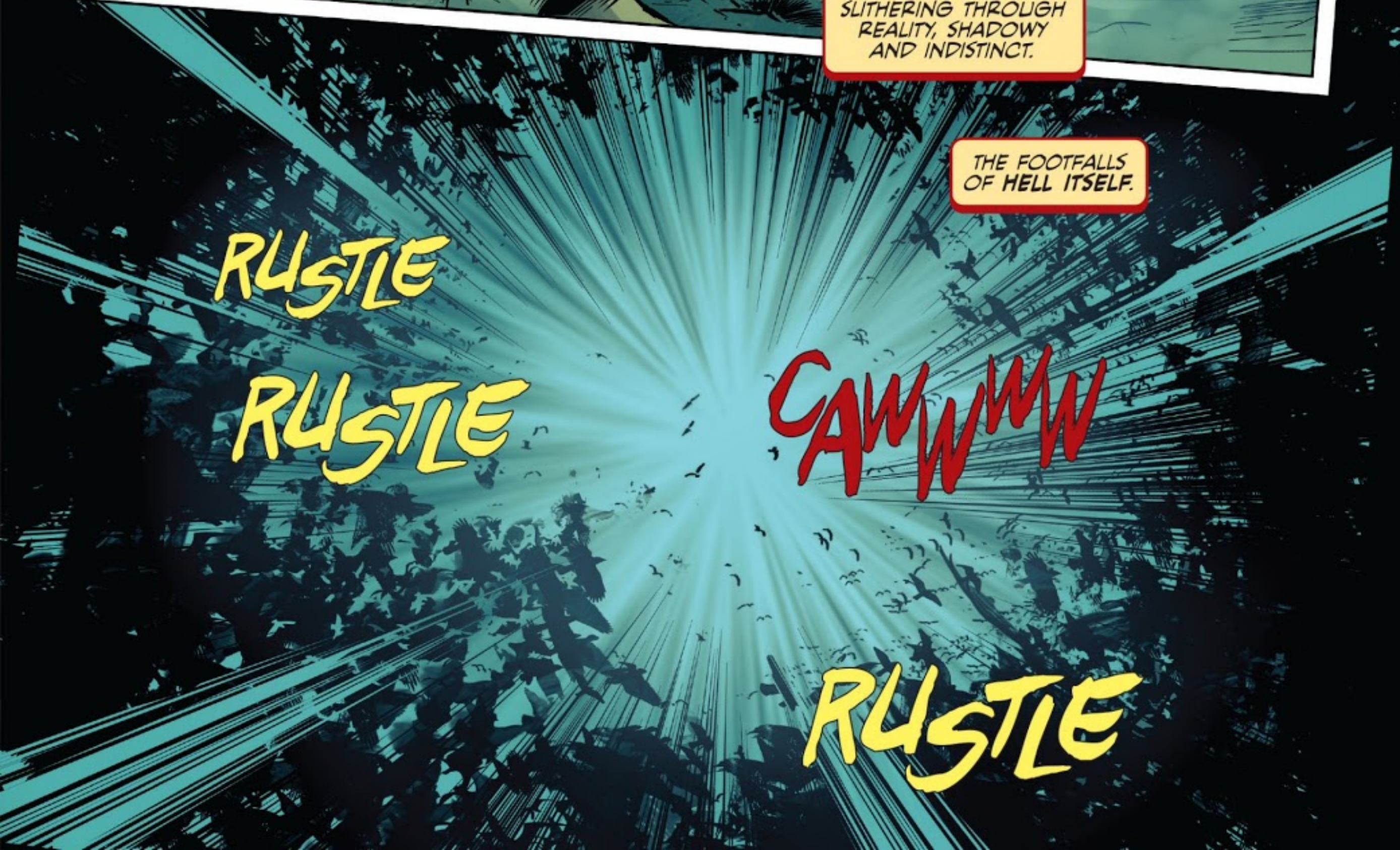
"...BUT I DOUBT OUR LUCK IS THAT GOOD."

IT'S HARD TO NOTICE, AT FIRST. LIKE STEALTHY, FURTIVE MOVEMENT IN THE DARK.

THAT FAMILIAR SENSE OF SOMETHING OTHER BRUSHING AGAINST THIS WORLD.



SLITHERING THROUGH REALITY, SHADOWY AND INDISTINCT.



THE FOOTFALLS OF HELL ITSELF.



GOD. THAT
STENCH...

SULPHUR AND
BRIMSTONE.

I'M GUESSING
THAT'S *EAU DE
HELL*, RIGHT? AND
THAT *CAN'T* BE
GOOD.



Hm.

AMUSING.



SO HOW
'BOUT WE START
MOVING IN THE
DIRECTION OF
NOT HERE?

IT'S NOT THE FIRST
TIME I'VE HAD A
HUMAN ALLY.



AT TIMES LIKE
THESE, I HAVE
TO WONDER
WHY I ALLOW IT.

THEY'RE
TERRIBLY
FRAGILE...

Huff
Huff
Huff

PREPARE
YOURSELF.



...AND THEY
NEED CONSTANT
PROTECTION.

--HUH?



WE NEED
TO GET SOME
DISTANCE FROM
THEM. NOW.

Whooolp!



Hm.
INTERESTING
CHALLENGE, THIS
DEVIL-BORN
CREATURE.

WORTH
INCLUSION IN
THE **MONUMENT**
WE BUILD,
YES.

IF WE
FIND HER.



Snff
Snff



Hm.

THAT WAY.
THE **VAMPIRELLA**
AND HER HUMAN
CATSPAW.



THEN WE
GO.
I WANT
TO LICK THEIR
BLOOD FROM
MY **CLAWS**.



HOLD,
MY SISTER.
A GOOD
HUNT MAKES
THE MEAT ALL
THE **SWEETER**,
YES?

Hm.



LET
THEM
RUN.




SOON,
IKARI--MY SISTER
OF *RAGE*--YOU
WILL VENT YOUR
BOTTOMLESS
ANGER.

SOON,
ZETSOBOU--
MY SISTER OF
DESPAIR--YOU
WILL DRINK DEEP
OF THEIR
SORROW.

Hm.



AND YOU,
KANKI, OUR
SISTER OF
DELIGHT?


 Hm. I WILL
 BATHE IN THE
 JOY OF **FREEDOM**,
 OF **MURDER**, OF
DEATH IN THE
 NIGHT.

AS WILL
WE *ALL*.

V
R
R
R
R
R
O
O
O
O
O
O
M



THEY'LL BE
BACK, SOON.

ALL WE BOUGHT
WITH THE EXPLOSION
IS A LITTLE TIME.

WITH ANY LUCK,
WE'VE BOUGHT
ENOUGH TIME.



UH, V?

A CREEPY
OLD FARMHOUSE
IN THE MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE, AND A
TRIO OF MONSTERS
IN HOT PURSUIT.

YOU'VE
NEVER EVEN
SEEN A HORROR
MOVIE, HAVE
YOU?



NO. TOO
MUCH LIKE
WORK.



YEAH,
WELL, *SPOILER
ALERT*:

IT ALMOST
NEVER ENDS
WELL FOR THE
PEOPLE IN THE
HOUSE.



LOOK AROUND FOR ANYTHING WE CAN USE. A WEAPON, A VEHICLE, A PHONE.

NOT MUCH HERE, V. UNLESS THEY HAVE A FATAL WEAKNESS TO DUST OR DEAD SPIDERS.



IT TAKES FIVE MINUTES TO CONFIRM THE BAD NEWS.

THERE'S NOTHING HERE.

--NOT A LOT IN THE WAY OF SUPPLIES.

ONE PISTOL, WITH ONE FULL CLIP, A COUPLE BAT-BLADES, AND SOME BLESSED TOYS.

I'D BE DEPRESSED IF I WASN'T ALREADY TERRIFIED.



STUPID. LEFT MY CELL IN THE CAR. COULD'VE USED IT TO CALL YOUR MYSTERIOUS FRIENDS--



THEY'RE *NOT* FRIENDS.

THEY DON'T VIEW...*THINGS* LIKE ME AS FRIENDS. JUST USEFUL *TOOLS*.



SO WHY
ARE WE OUT
HERE?

WHY PUT
YOURSELF--
PUT *US*--IN
THE MIDDLE
OF THIS?



...WHO
ELSE IS GOING
TO DO IT,
SOFIA?

IF I AM
MERELY AN
INSTRUMENT,
THEN I SHOULD
FULFILL MY
PURPOSE.



JESUS.

YOU'RE NOT
AN 'INSTRUMENT,'
V. YOU'RE A
PERSON.



NO.

I'M
NOT.

I'M NOT ONE
OF YOU, SOFIA.
YOU SHOULD KEEP
THAT IN MIND.



KEEP
LOOKING.

*THEY'LL
BE HERE
SOON.*



FOOLISH.

FOOLISH TO
BRING THE
GIRL ALONG.

SHE'S RIGHT.
IT CAN'T END
WELL FOR HER.



BEST TO KEEP
HER AT SOME
DISTANCE.

SHIELD HER FROM
THEM IF I CAN, GET
HER CLEAR OF THE
FIGHT IF POSSIBLE.

BEFORE SHE STARTS
TO MAKE ME THINK
I'M HUMAN, TOO.



UH, V.?

BECAUSE THE LAST TIME I
FELT THAT WAY, IT DIDN'T
END WELL FOR ME, EITHER.



I'VE BEEN
THINKING.
ABOUT
SOMETHING
THOSE...WOMEN
SAID TO
YOU.



WE GOT PUT ON THEIR TRAIL
BECAUSE OF A SERIES OF
MURDERS, ACCORDING
TO YOUR MYSTERY...
ASSOCIATES.

THE DEAD
LEFT *CRUCIFIED* AND
ON DISPLAY WITH KANJI
SCRAWLED IN THEIR
OWN *BLOOD.*

臆病

悪徳

欺瞞

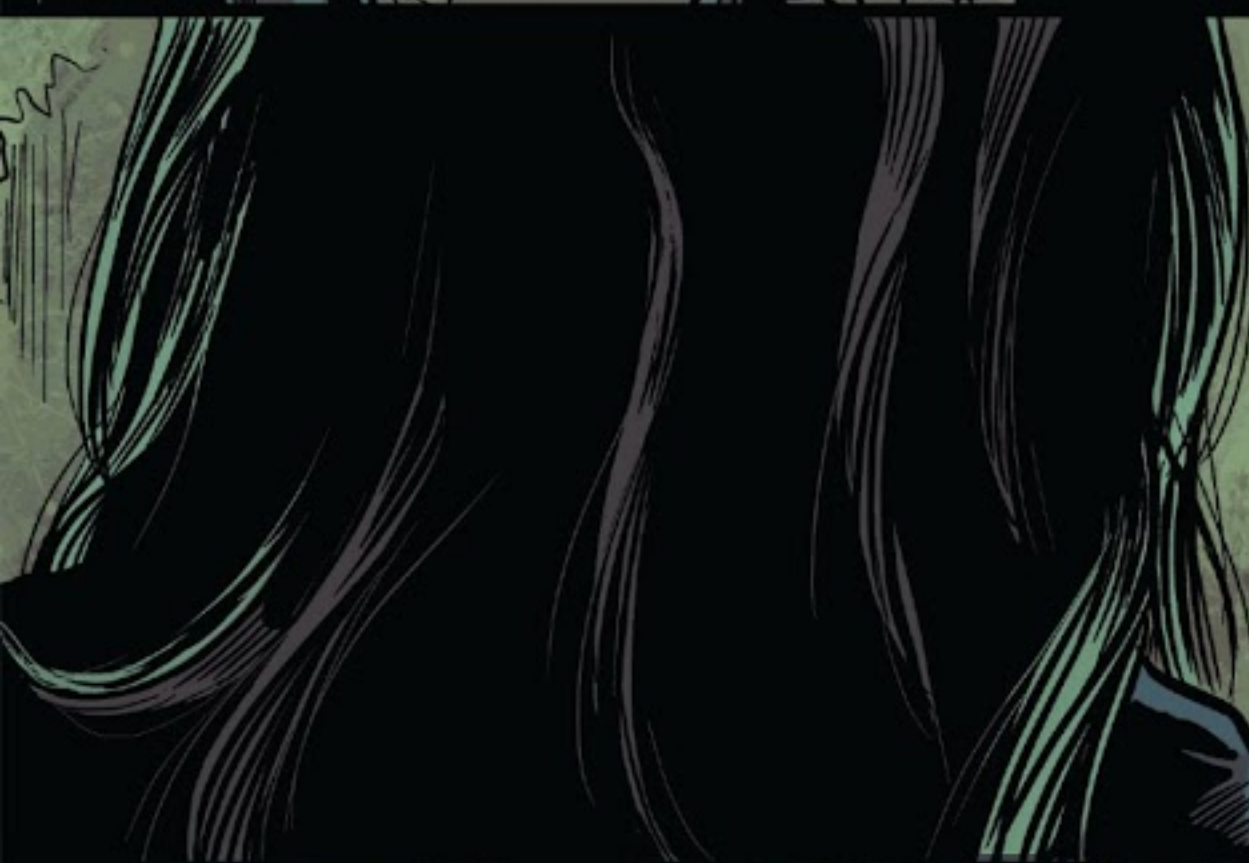
FIRST, A REVEREND,
MARKED WITH THE KANJI
FOR '*DECEIT*.' THEN, A COP,
MARKED FOR '*COWARDICE*.'
LAST, THE GUY FROM THE
GAS STATION, MARKED
AS '*IMMORAL*.'

ONE OF
THE WOMEN
WHO ATTACKED
YOU SAID AS
MUCH:

"WE BUILD A
MONUMENT TO
CORRUPTION. THE
IMMORAL, THE
DECEITFUL, THE
COWARDLY."

"THEN SHE SAID YOUR
DEATH WOULD COVER
DISLOYALTY, *DISHONOR*,
AND *INSOLENCE*. IT'S
LIKE A *CHECKLIST*
TO THEM."

"SO WHAT HAPPENS
IF THEY *CAN'T*
COMPLETE IT?"



...INTERESTING.
GOOD WORK,
SOFIA.



AND,
AS IT HAPPENS,
MAYBE THERE'S
A *WEAPON* HERE
WE *CAN* USE...





...SO LET'S
HOPE WE HAVE
ENOUGH TIME
TO USE IT.

TO BE CONCLUDED...

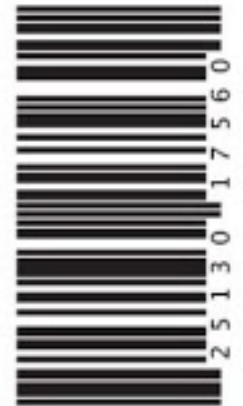
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REUAS
2011

DYNAMITE.NET



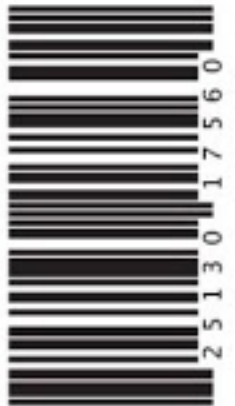
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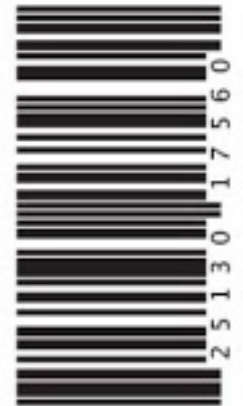
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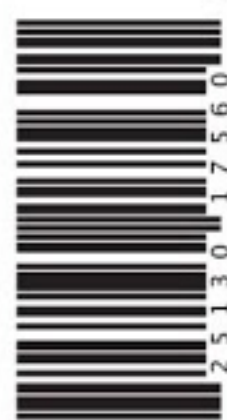


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ABANDONED FARMHOUSE,
NEAR EPHRATA, WA.

YOU'LL DO
FINE, SOFIA. JUST
STICK TO THE PLAN,
AND WE'LL **BOTH**
MAKE IT OUT OF
HERE.

I'M NOT
SURE THIS
QUALIFIES AS
A **PLAN**, V.

LET'S
RECAP: A TRIO OF
INDESTRUCTABLE
DEMONIC ASSASSINS
ABOUT TO KILL US?
CHECK.

NO BACKUP,
NO SUPPLIES, AND
AN ABANDONED
FARMHOUSE WHERE
NO ONE CAN HEAR
US **SCREAM**?
CHECK.

OH, AND
ONE GUN LEFT
BETWEEN US?
CHECK.

THEY'RE **NOT**
INDESTRUCTABLE.

NEITHER
ARE YOU,
V.

PERHAPS
NOT,
GOOD
THING I HAVE
YOU AS MY
SECRET
WEAPON.

CHAK

MY COMPANION--SOFIA MURRAY--IS BRAVE AND RESOURCEFUL, BUT HER FEAR IS A PALPABLE, LIVING THING.

IT'S TAKEN YOU LONG ENOUGH, HELLSPAWN.

OUR ENEMY IS RELENTLESS, DRUNK ON THE BLOOD FROM SEVERAL GRUESOME MURDERS, AND EAGER FOR MORE.

I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER...

INTENT ON BUILDING A MONUMENT TO HUMAN WEAKNESS AND SIN.

...IF YOU'D HAD ENOUGH YET.

A CORRUPT CELEBRATION OF THEIR NEWFOUND FREEDOM FROM HELL.

Hm.

Hm.

MOST AMUSING, SISTER.

WE KERASU SHIMEI--WE SISTERS OF THE CROW--HAVE RARELY KNOWN SUCH SPORT.

WITH YOUR DEATH, WE ADD TO OUR MONUMENT, THREE-FOLD.

I BELIEVE YOU SAID I REPRESENT DISLOYALTY, DISHONOR AND INSOLENT.

YOUR PETTY CHECKLIST OF SIN.

WHERE DOES MY SENDING YOU SCREAMING BACK TO HELL FIT INTO YOUR PLANS?

W



INDIVIDUALLY, EACH
OF THE KERASU
SHIMAI IS A
TERRIFYING, SKILLED
COMBATANT.

YOU
FIRST.

KRAAAK

WHEN THEY
WORK IN CONCERT,
THEY'RE PRACTICALLY
UNSTOPPABLE.



SPEED, POWER AND PERFECT
COORDINATION FORMING A
LETHAL, HELLBORN MACHINE.

CAWWWW

Hm.

Hm.

THERE'S
AN OLD
SAYING:

ENTER
FREELY AND
OF YOUR
OWN WILL.



TIME TO
BREAK THE
MACHINE.

WHO'S
HIDING?

KR RANKH

I'LL BE
WITH YOU IN
A MINUTE.

CAW



HAMMER AT THE
GEARS UNTIL
THEY BREAK.

KAR
RAASH

NNNGH

DIE.

SLSSSSH

WE SHALL
FEAST...

...ON YOUR
BEATING
HEART.

NNNGH
PERHAPS.

AND KEEP POUNDING
ON THEM UNTIL THE
ENTIRE MECHANISM
BLOWS APART.

IF
I HAD
ONE.

DEMONS HAVE TO PLAY BY CERTAIN RULES.

IT'S THE MASKS, ISN'T IT?

KRAK KRAK KRAK

CAAWWWWW

THOSE RULES ARE STACKED HEAVILY IN THEIR FAVOR, BUT THEY HAVE TO OBEY THEM.

KRAK KRAK

YOU ESCAPED FROM HELL. YOU WEREN'T SUMMONED.

DEMONS HAVE TO PLAY BY CERTAIN RULES.

IT'S THE MASKS, ISN'T IT?

KRAK KRAK KRAK

CAAWWWWW

KRAK KRAK

THOSE RULES ARE STACKED HEAVILY IN THEIR FAVOR, BUT THEY HAVE TO OBEY THEM.

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DEMONS HAVE TO PLAY BY CERTAIN RULES.

IT'S THE MASKS, ISN'T IT?

KRAK KRAK KRAK

CAAWWWWW

KRAK KRAK

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YOU ESCAPED FROM HELL. YOU WEREN'T SUMMONED.

DEMONS HAVE TO PLAY BY CERTAIN RULES.

IT'S THE MASKS, ISN'T IT?

KRAK KRAK KRAK

CAAWWWWW

THOSE RULES ARE STACKED HEAVILY IN THEIR FAVOR, BUT THEY HAVE TO OBEY THEM.

KRAK


YOU ESCAPED FROM HELL. YOU WEREN'T SUMMONED.



THE KERASU
SHIMAI ARE
NO DIFFERENT.


YOU NEED
AN **ANCHOR**
TO KEEP YOU
HERE.

THE THREE OF THEM
WORK AS A TEAM,
AND AS A TEAM,
THEY'RE **UNBEATABLE**.




--KILL YOU...
HEAR YOU
SCREAM--

THE MURDERS
YOU COMMITTED,
YOUR "MONUMENT?"
A **RITUAL** TO KEEP
YOU **HERE** IN THE
PHYSICAL WORLD.



BUT IF YOU SEPARATE
THEM? STRIP THEM OF
THEIR ADVANTAGES IN
COORDINATION, SPEED,
AND POWER?



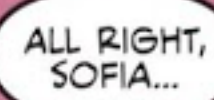
THEY ARE
NOTHING
BUT **PREY**.

OFF YOU
GO.

BLAM



BLAM





...WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

KILLED A DEMONESS.

ALL IN ALL, A GOOD START TO THE EVENING.



Hm.

TRAGIC.

THAT YOU SHOULD FIGHT *US*, TO PROTECT MERE *CATTLE*. SUCH FUTILITY, YES?



WE *KNOW* WHAT *WE* ARE. UNDYING, MURDER INCARNATE.

NEXT TO THAT, WHAT ARE *YOU*? CONFUSED SHADOWS OF MEMORY AND POWER, DENYING YOUR PAST, DENYING YOUR *POTENTIAL*.

HOW CAN *YOU* HOPE TO DEFEAT *US*?



I SHOT YOUR SISTER IN THE *FACE*.

THAT SEEMED TO DO THE TRICK.



THEY'RE STILL
POWERFUL, STILL
TREMENDOUSLY
SKILLED.

BUT THEY'RE JUST
SLIGHTLY OUT OF SYNCH
NOW. FRACTIONALLY
SLOWER THAN OUR
EARLIER ENCOUNTERS.

WHUD
CAW W

SO I KEEP UP
THE PRESSURE.
KEEP THEM OFF
BALANCE.

KRAK

HURT
THEM.

IT'S NOT
YOUR TURN
YET...

KEEP THEM
FOCUSED ON
THE FIGHT,
AND ON ME...

...BE
PATIENT.

KKRAASH



...AND JUST TAKE
THE HITS, AND KEEP
PUNISHING THEM.



AND PRAY TO THE
DARK MOTHER
THAT SOFIA DOES
HER PART IN TIME.



CAAWWW

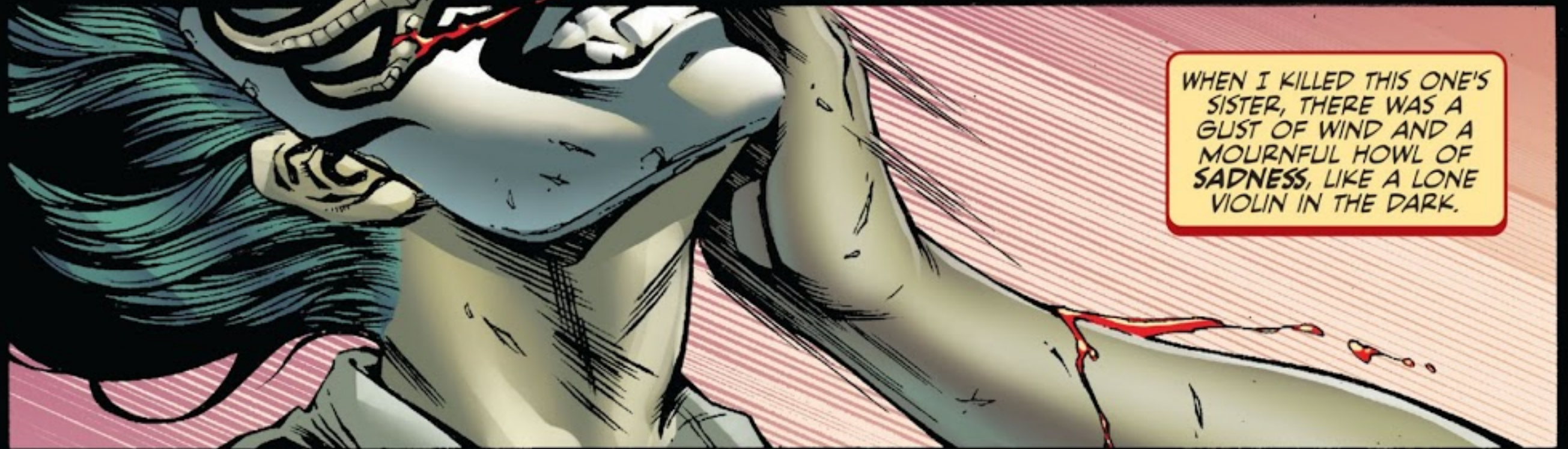
DIE.

DIE.

D--

WHAM

SLASH



WHEN I KILLED THIS ONE'S SISTER, THERE WAS A GUST OF WIND AND A MOURNFUL HOWL OF SADNESS, LIKE A LONE VIOLIN IN THE DARK.



WHEN THIS ONE DIES...

KSSSSHHHHH

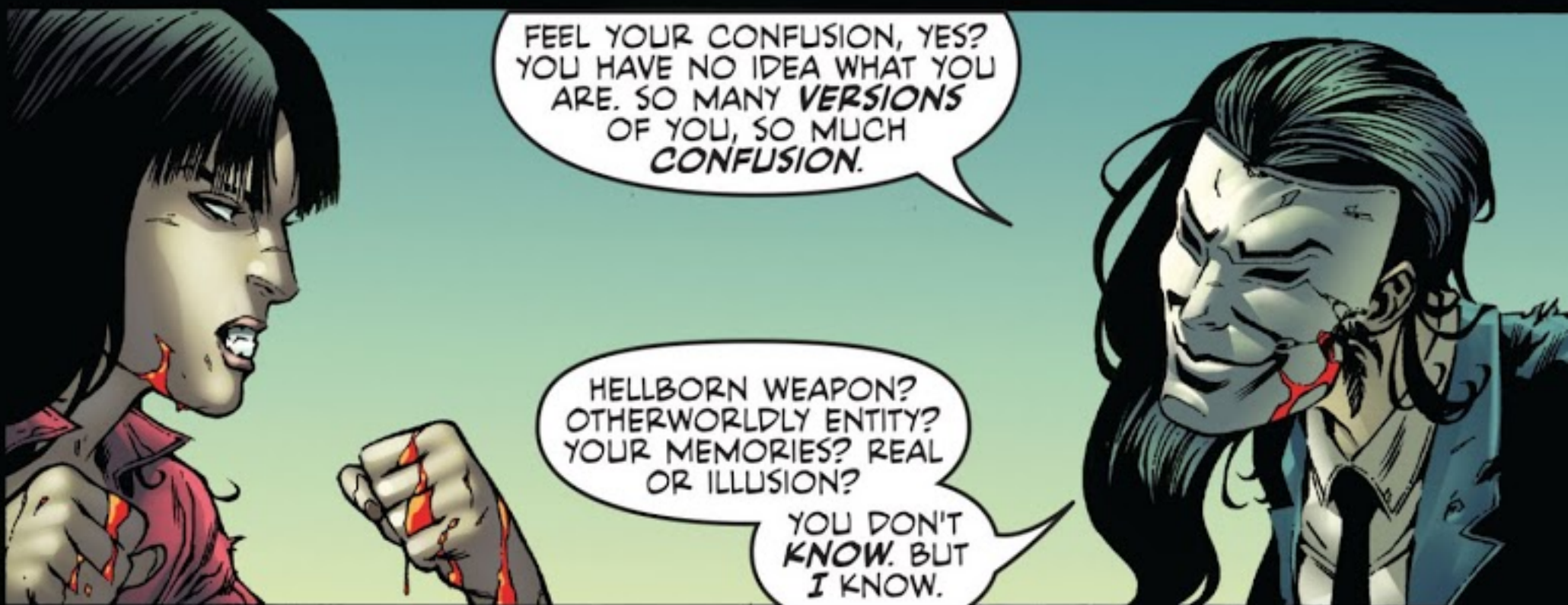
...IT DIES
SCREAMING
IN ANGER.



JUST
YOU AND
ME NOW.



Hm.
SO
STRANGE.



FEEL YOUR CONFUSION, YES?
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU
ARE. SO MANY **VERSIONS**
OF YOU, SO MUCH
CONFUSION.

HELLBORN WEAPON?
OTHERWORLDLY ENTITY?
YOUR MEMORIES? REAL
OR ILLUSION?

YOU DON'T
KNOW. BUT
I KNOW.



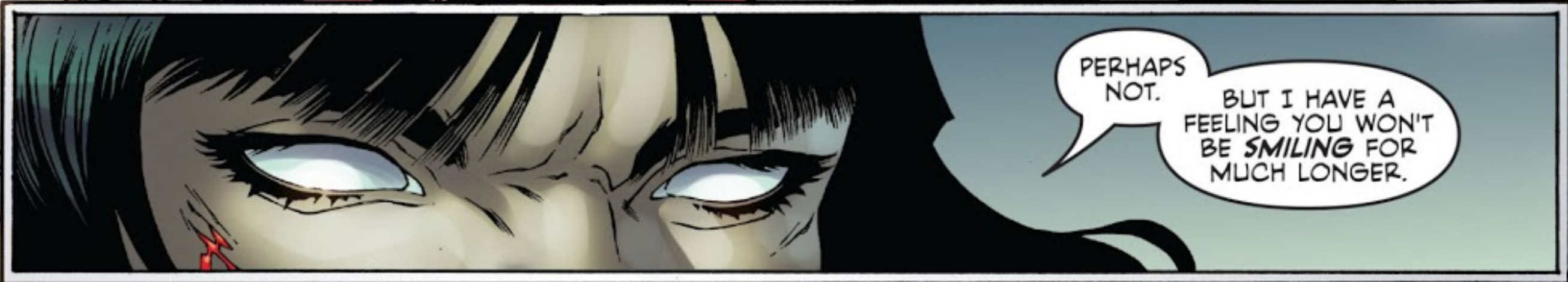
ALMOST
THERE...

ALMOST
THERE...



WHEN I FINISH
YOU, FINISH YOUR
COMPANION...

...YOU
STILL WON'T
HAVE ANY
ANSWERS.



PERHAPS
NOT.

BUT I HAVE A
FEELING YOU WON'T
BE *SMILING* FOR
MUCH LONGER.



Hm.

AN
ERROR.



FINISH
THE FIGHT
ANOTHER
DAY.

AFTER RITUAL
IS COMPLETE, YES?
AFTER I TURN THIS
WORLD INTO MY
PLAYGROUND.

WHAM



FAREWELL,
VAMPIRELLA.



WE WILL
MEET--



CAW

THUD



RULES. YOUR KIND
ALWAYS HAS TO
FOLLOW RULES.

THE RITUAL KILLINGS,
DESIGNED TO MAKE
IT **PERMANENT**.

THERE ARE OTHER
RULES, OF COURSE.
WARDS, SPELLS...

YOU
WEREN'T SUMMONED,
SO YOU CAN'T STAY,
UNLESS YOU'RE
ANCHORED HERE. YOUR
MASKS KEEP YOU HERE
TEMPORARILY.





YOU SAID
YOU KNOW WHO I
AM. WHERE I CAME
FROM. YOU SAID NOT
KNOWING WHAT I
REALLY AM IS A
WEAKNESS.

I'VE THOUGHT
ABOUT THAT
FOR **YEARS**,
DEMONESS.

WHAT AM
I? WHERE
DID I COME
FROM?

WHICH OF
MY MEMORIES
ARE REAL OR
FALSE?



I FINALLY CAME
UP WITH AN ANSWER
THAT **WORKS** FOR
ME.

WHEN IT COMES
TO THE QUESTION
OF MY **PAST**...

KLICK



....I JUST
DON'T *CARE*
ANYMORE.



BLAM

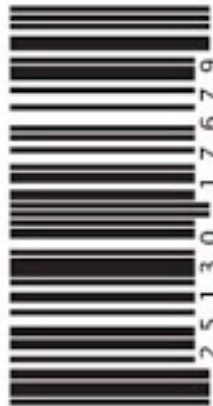
THE END
NEXT: "THE SIDE TRIP"

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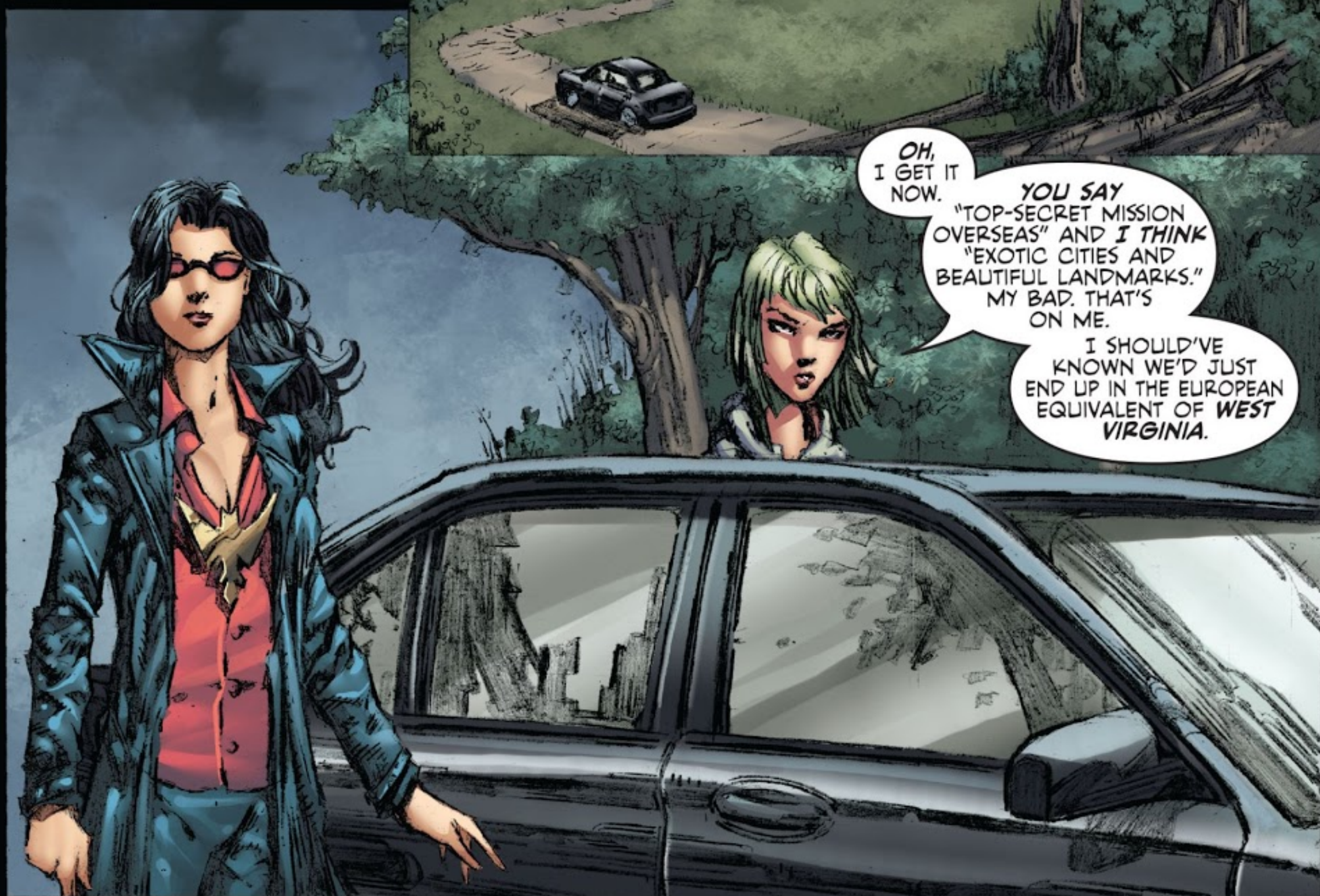
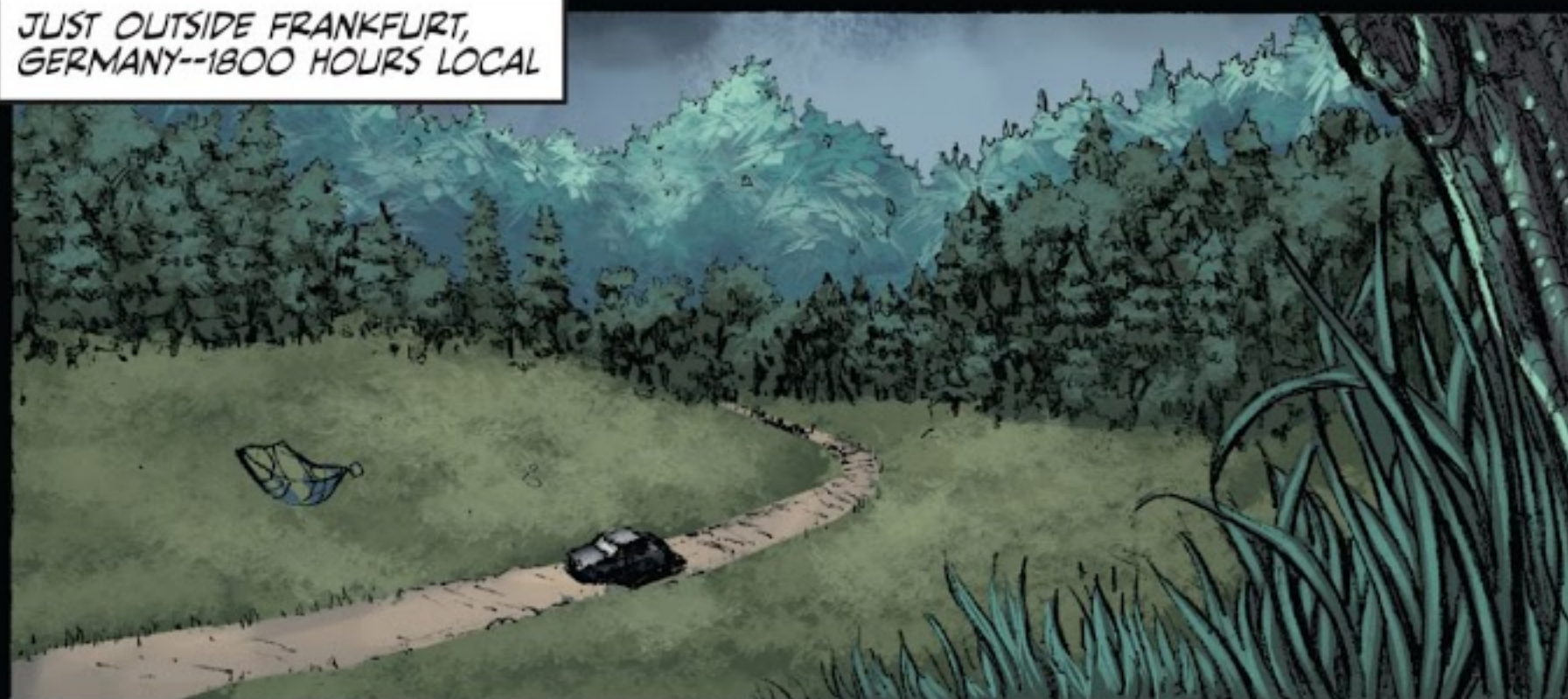


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Revaux
2011

JUST OUTSIDE FRANKFURT,
GERMANY--1800 HOURS LOCAL



OH,
I GET IT
NOW.

YOU SAY
"TOP-SECRET MISSION
OVERSEAS" AND I THINK
"EXOTIC CITIES AND
BEAUTIFUL LANDMARKS."
MY BAD. THAT'S
ON ME.

I SHOULD'VE
KNOWN WE'D JUST
END UP IN THE EUROPEAN
EQUIVALENT OF **WEST
VIRGINIA**.



HE'S LEAVING.
OF **COURSE**
HE'S LEAVING.





I ASSUME
WE'RE EXPECTED.

MY ASSOCIATE
HERE IS *SOFIA*,
AND I'M...



...*VAMPIRELLA*.
IT IS AN *HONOR* AND
A PERSONAL *PLEASURE*
TO MAKE YOUR
ACQUAINTANCE.

I AM *DAVID*,
AND THIS IS
GREGORIO.

WE ARE *ASSISTANT*
CURATES IN THE
SILVER APOSTOLATE,
AND WE ARE AT
YOUR SERVICE.



THAT'S GOOD
TO KNOW.
THANK YOU.



I AM A GREAT
ADMIRER OF YOUR WORK.
FOR MY *SCRIVENER'S*
ACHIEVEMENT, I PREPARED
THE *CHRONICLE* OF YOUR
EXPLOITS WITH THE
SCARLET LEGION.

IF YOU
WOULD, PLEASE
STEP INSIDE THE
PERIMETER
PROPER...?



THEY'RE
CERTAINLY *EAGER*,
AREN'T THEY?

SURE, FOR
YOU THEY'RE
PRACTICALLY A FAN
CLUB. I'M JUST
YOUR *PLUS-ONE*.







YOU MADE GOOD TIME.



WE WERE HEADED TO **RUSSIA** WHEN THEY DIVERTED US HERE.

RUSSIA. HMMM. YOU WILL HAVE AN INTERESTING **TIME** THERE, I THINK.

OH? IS THAT AN **INFORMED** PREDICTION, MISTER...?

FAUSTO SABATINI. LET US PROCEED WITH OUR BUSINESS, EH?



"**CARCIERE DEI DEMONI**"? THAT MEANS YOU'RE AN **EXORCIST**, RIGHT?

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.

I HAVE SAID MY **PRAYERS**, **SIGNORE**...



...AND THE **LORD** HAS SAID AS MUCH TO ME AS HE **WILL** FOR NOW. I AM **READY**.



I WILL TAKE THE GOOD LADY **NOVELLA** UP TO HER ROOM AND BEGIN THE RITES. YOU MUST **STAY** HERE UNTIL I SUMMON YOU.

DO NOT ACT FOR ANYTHING BUT THE SOUND OF MY **VOICE**. BE SWIFT, BUT BE **CERTAIN**.







FORGIVE
US, LORD--

--SHE'S SHAKING.
HE'S TRYING TO
MAKE US HURT HER.
TAKE CARE--



SHE'S
SECURE.

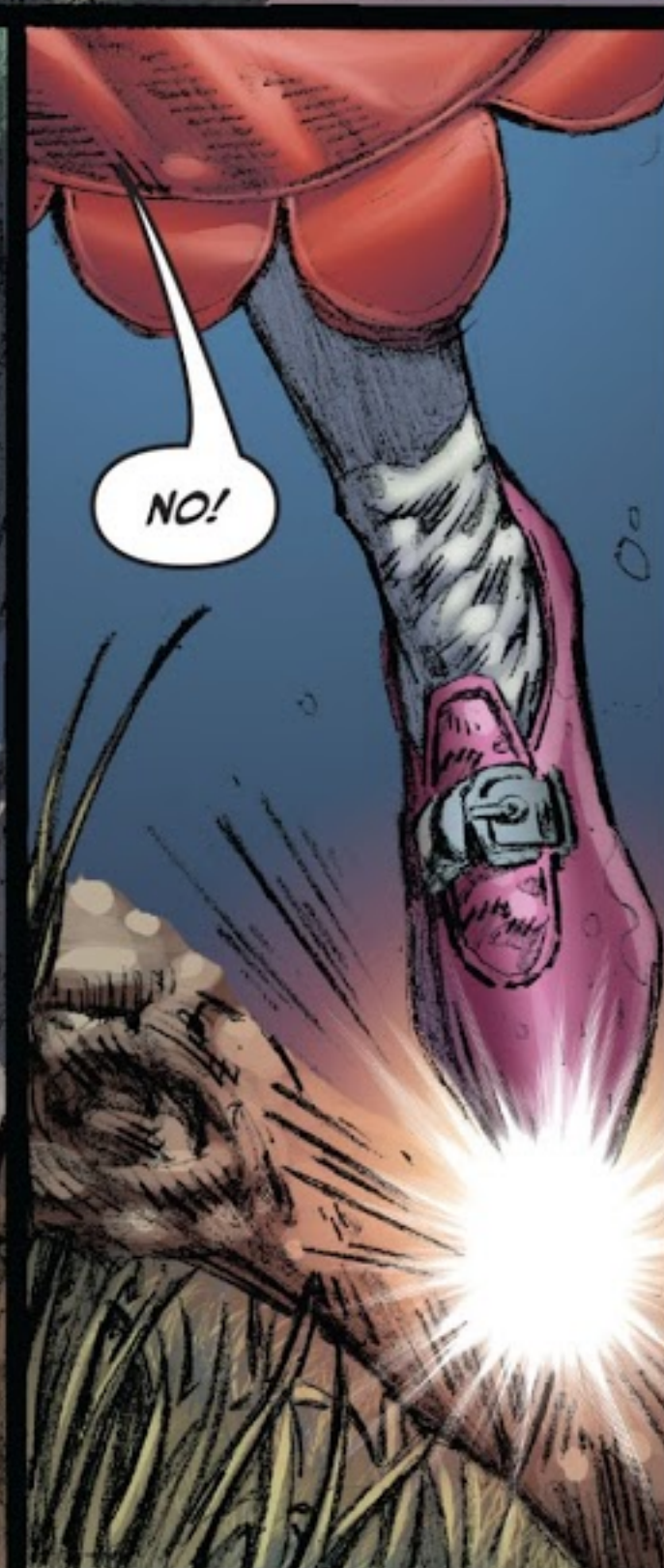
EEHN
GMMURRGH
TUFIKTUFIK
GRYYAAOO
HUHUUH



OPEN THE
DOOR, SOFIA.
OPEN THE DOOR
FOR ME.



WHO'S THERE?
I CAN'T **SEE** YOU.
WHO'S AT THE
DOOR?





RELENT.



THEY'RE **HUNGRY**. WHY DIDN'T THEY COME FOR ME? WHY DIDN'T THEY **FINISH** IT?

WHO'S THERE?!



I'M **HERE**, LITTLE GIRL. I'VE ALWAYS **BEEN** HERE. I WILL ALWAYS **BE** HERE.



LIKE THE **SONG** YOU'VE NEVER HEARD THAT YOU ALWAYS HEAR OFF IN THE DISTANCE.



YOU WILL LISTEN TO MY VOICE. YOU WILL NOT LOOK TO MY FORM. TO REVEAL IS TO BETRAY.

I OFFER SANCTUARY. I OFFER RELEASE.







THOSE ARE
GOOD AND HONEST
PEOPLE IN THAT CARRIAGE.
NO KIN AND NO CONCERN
OF **YOURS**, THAT'S
FOR SURE.



HERE NOW, **YOU**
BRAZEN WOMAN!
WE'LL SEE YOU **SUBMIT**
TO THE LAW OR WE'LL
SEND **YOU** TO THE
UNDERTAKER!

LET GO
OF ME! THIS
ISN'T **REAL**, THIS
ISN'T **RIGHT!**



YOU'RE NO
AUTHORITY ON
RIGHT AND REAL,
TART. YOU STINK
OF **SIN AND**
BLOOD.

RELEASE
ME NOW. I'M
WARNING
YOU--

RIGHT,
THEN.



CHU-
KRAK

YOU'RE
SLOW. TOO
SLOW.



SHRIIK

CHUK



KA SPOK



I ASKED IF YOU WERE **READY**, GIRL. YOU GAVE ME YOUR **WORD--**



YOU MUST KNOW, MISS MURRAY, THAT THE DARK WOMAN IS A SISTER TO NO ONE IN THE END.



YOU'RE **WRONG**. SHE'S MY **FRIEND**. SHE WOULD NEVER HURT ME...**WAIT**. NO.

THAT'S **NOT RIGHT**. SHE **WOULDN'T** HURT ME, BUT...SHE **DOESN'T NEED** ME.

YOU HAD IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME, MISS MURRAY. SHE MEANS TO DO YOU HARM, AND SHE WILL DO...

...IF YOU CAN'T MUSTER UP THE WILL TO STOP HER BEFORE THE CHOICE IS NO LONGER YOURS.



NO. NO! **STOP THE CARRIAGE**. I WANT **OUT**, DO YOU HEAR ME? **STOP THE--**

YOU SELFISH LITTLE WITCH! I'M HERE WITH YOU! I'M LOCKED IN THIS PATHETIC LITTLE WALKING **COFFIN** THAT YOU CALL A **BODY--**

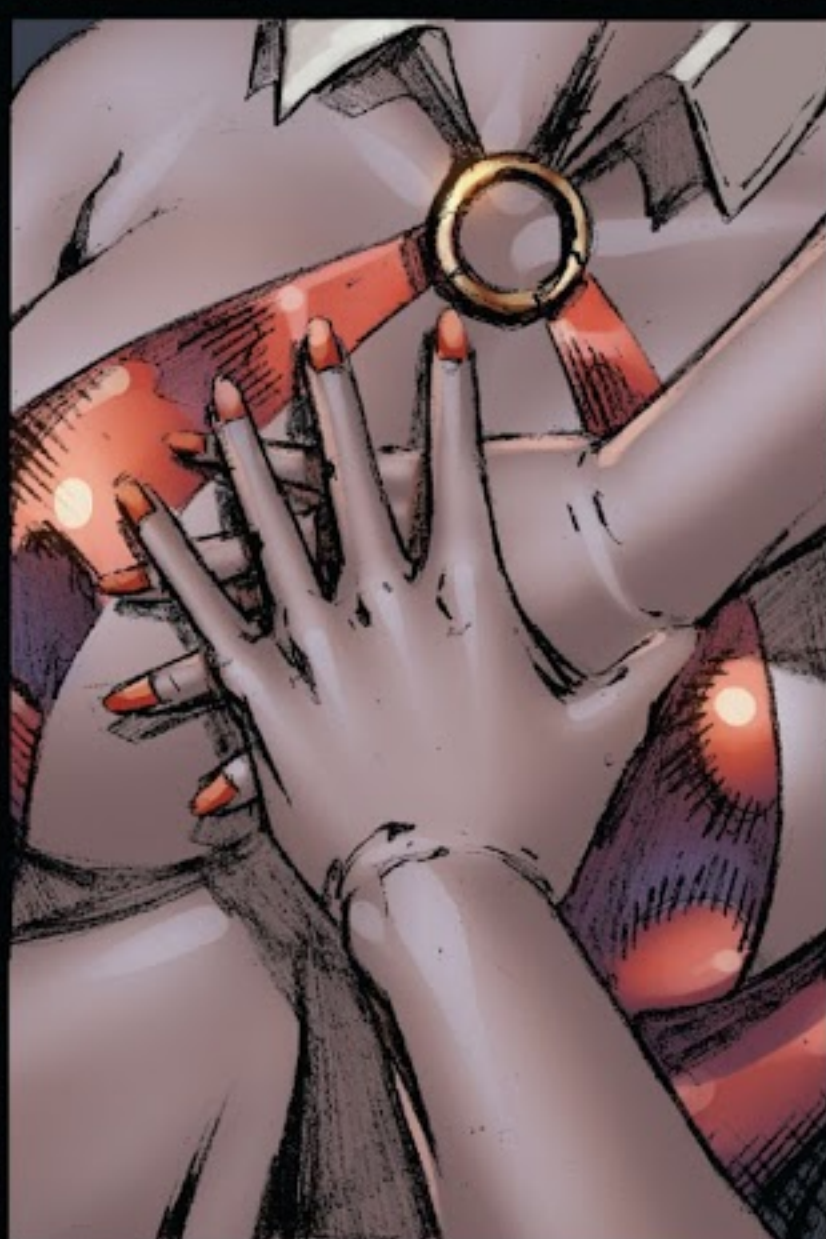
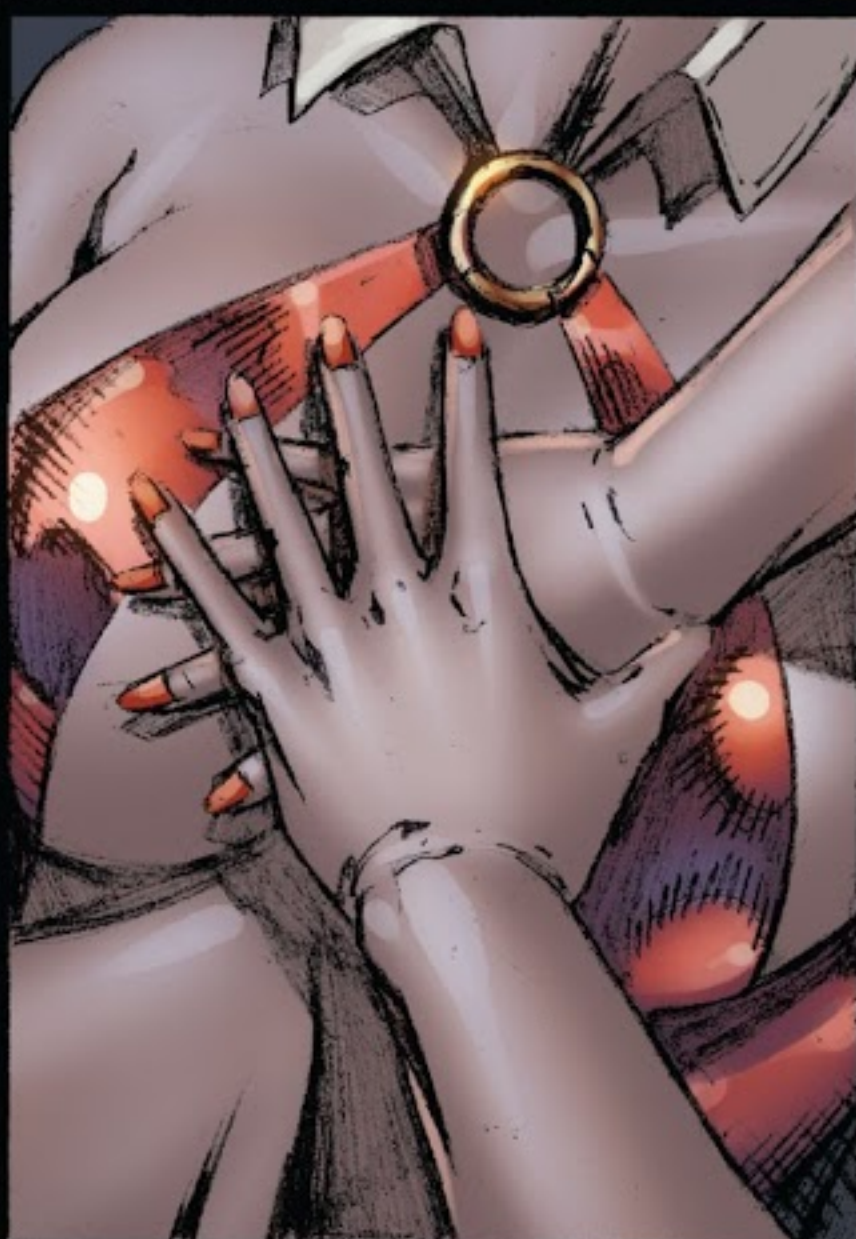
--AND YOU'RE **REFUSING TO PROTECT ME!**



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE. I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE. I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN--











RELENT. RELENT.
RELENT!


RELENT. RELENT.
RELENT!

RELENT. RELENT.
RELENT!

WAIT! THE
VESSEL...IT'S
SEALED!









YOU'RE **DISGUSTING**,
YOU KNOW THAT?
YOU **SICK BASTARD!**
HOW COULD YOU LET
THAT HAPPEN? THAT
POOR **WOMAN--**

--IS A LOYAL
SERVANT OF THE **CHURCH**,
AND ONE OF THE **FEW** PEOPLE
ON EARTH WITH THE **SPIRITUAL**
PURITY NEEDED TO **BEAR** THIS
UNIQUE BURDEN. THAT IS
WHY THE DEMON TRIED TO
AVOID BEING MERGED
WITH HER.

THIS IS **OLD**
HAT TO NOVELLA.
SHE'S BEEN HOUSING
DEMONS **WITHIN**
HERSELF SINCE SHE
WAS 17 YEARS
OLD.



THEN HASN'T
SHE GIVEN **ENOUGH**?
WHY NOT LET HER LIVE
OUT HER **LAST YEARS**
IN **PEACE**?



LAST YEARS?
SHE'S BARELY 40.
I'LL CONCEDE THAT
THE **PHYSICAL** TOLL FOR
HER SERVICE HAS BEEN
SIGNIFICANT, BUT
WE DO NOT **FORCE**
HER TO ASSIST
US.



REFLECT
ON **THIS**, MISS
MURRAY:



WE **ALL**
CARRY OUR **OWN**
DEMONS, DAY IN
AND DAY OUT...



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«--SHEREMETYEVO
CONTROL TO
AEROFLOT
NINE NINE ONE,
COME IN--»

«(AE 991,
RESPOND
PLEASE.)»

«(NO RESPONSE
SINCE IT HIT THE
OUTER MARKER
BEACON.)»

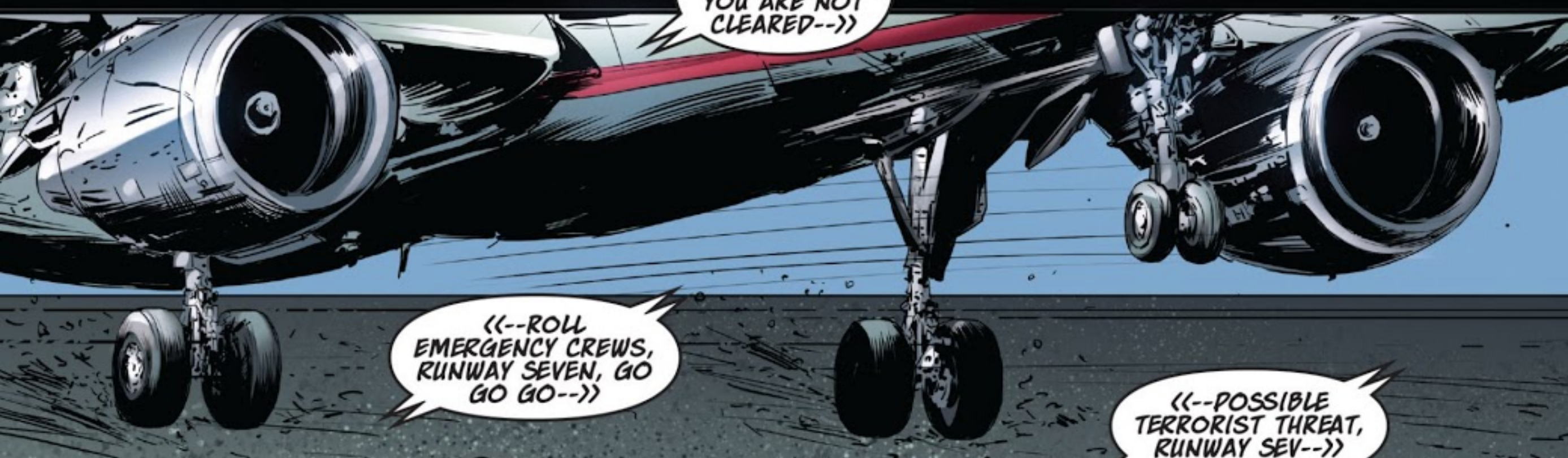
TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.--J.R.



«(NINE NINE
ONE, YOU ARE
NOT CLEARED FOR
APPROACH--»

«(I'M TELLING
YOU, YEVGENI,
SOMETHING'S
WRONG.)»

«(PROBABLY
CHECHENS.)»



«--DAMN IT,
NINE NINE ONE,
YOU ARE NOT
CLEARED--»

«--ROLL
EMERGENCY CREWS,
RUNWAY SEVEN, GO
GO GO--»

«--POSSIBLE
TERRORIST THREAT,
RUNWAY SEV--»



«(RESPOND,
NINE NINE
ONE)»

«--CHECHENS,
MAYBE? WHO
GODDAMN
KNOWS?»)»

«--BE ADVISED,
MILITARY SECURITY
TEAM EN ROUTE--»

«--ANYONE
HAVE ANY IDEA
WHAT THE HELL IS
GOING ON?»)»

SHEREMETYEVO
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
MOSCOW, RUSSIA
2015 LOCAL TIME



«MOVE IT
MOVE IT
MOVE IT!»

«KEEP THE
RESCUE CREWS
BACK UNTIL WE
SECURE THE
PLANE!»

«ONE TO
COMMAND,
CLEAR AT ENTRY
POINT.»

«MOVING
(N.)»

«GOT ANY
MOVEMENT?»

«THERMAL
READ IS
NEGATIVE»

«SOMETHING
ON THE WINDOWS.
CAN'T SEE»

«TEAM ONE,
THIS IS COLONEL
VANKIN: ADVISE
STATUS.»

«I SAY
AGAIN, WHAT IS
YOUR STATUS,
ONE?»

«TRIAGE
HERE, KEEP THIS
AREA CLEAR»

«...MERCIFUL
CHRIST IN HIS
HEAVEN.»

«UH, COLONEL,
THIS IS DEFINITELY
NOT A TERRORIST
INCIDENT...»

«WHAT
ABOUT THE
PASSENGERS?»

«UH, UNKNOWN,
COLONEL.»

«WHAT
DO YOU MEAN,
'UNKNOWN'?
WHERE ARE THEY,
SERGEANT?»

«...NOWHERE,
SIR.»

«EYES OPEN FOR
TRIPWIRES»

«(AND
EVERYWHERE.)»

HHWWRRGH

«(MANIFEST
SAYS 89
PASSENGERS)»

DOOOOT

THIS IS
GENERAL DIRECTOR
VASILENKO, HERR
SCHULD.

WE HAVE
A SITUATION
HERE...

«(MAY BE
RIGGED)»

«(GET THOSE
BODY BAGS
READY)»

"...ONE REQUIRING
SPECIAL ATTENTION."

FOUR HOURS LATER.

FOR THE
RECORD, I HATE
IT WHEN YOUR
PHONE RINGS.

LAST TIME, I ENDED
UP POSSESSED BY
A DEMON.

BEFORE THAT,
CHASED BY BIRD-MONSTER
YAKUZA-FROM-HELL
BIKERS.

YOU SAID
YOU **LIKED**
TO TRAVEL.

ЗАПРЕТНАЯ ЗОНА.
НЕ ВХОДИТЬ.

BA-
DEET
KA-CHAK

RUSSIA IN
THE DEAD OF
WINTER ISN'T
EXACTLY MY IDEA
OF A GOOD
TIME.

NOR
MINE.

«--YES, SIR, THE...
SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR
HAS ARRIVED--»

«(I AM
AWARE OF MY
DUTIES, SIR.)»

I AM GENERAL
DIRECTOR
VASILENKO, AND
THE SAFETY OF THIS
FACILITY IS MY
RESPONSIBILITY.

SNAP

THAT WAS MY
PRESIDENT, WITH THE
REASSURING MESSAGE THAT
IF THIS...**INCIDENT** IS NOT
RESOLVED IMMEDIATELY,
MY BOLLOCKS ARE
FORFEIT.

SO. LET
US GET TO
WORK.

THEY'RE TERRIFIED. LITTLE MEN ACCUSTOMED TO WIELDING AUTHORITY, NOW FORCED TO CONFRONT REAL, AND TERRIBLE, POWER.

"--NO RADIO CALLS FROM THE PLANE, BUT IT LANDED JUST FINE."

"VANKIN'S MEN SECURED THE SITE IMMEDIATELY."

JESUS, IT'S FREEZING. AREN'T YOU COLD?

"NO ONE HAS DEBARKED. WHICH IS, OF COURSE, IMPOSSIBLE."

CONSTANTLY.

WHATEVER HAPPENED HERE SCARED HIM ENOUGH TO CALL HIS SUPERIORS, WHO IN TURN MADE CALLS OF THEIR OWN.

LET'S GO.

UNTIL WORD REACHED MY BENEFACTORS.

THEN ANOTHER CALL IS MADE.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO STAY HERE, SOFIA.

SNFF

CALLS THAT SEND
US INTO SOMEONE'S
NIGHTMARE.

THIS IS
GOING TO
BE A BAD
ONE.

FORGET IT.
I'M HALF
FROZEN, VEE.
WAIT FOR
M--

--ME.

JESUS.

ALL THAT
BLOOD.

VEE? WHERE...
WHERE ARE THE
BODIES?





GOOD
QUESTION.

THE AIR IS
PERFUMED WITH
THE SCENT OF
COPPER.



MAKING ME
GIDDY, ALMOST
LIGHTHEADED.

GO CHECK
THE COCKPIT.



BUT UNDERNEATH,
I SMELL ROTTING
MEAT.



THE RUSSIANS WERE
WORRIED ABOUT
TERRORISTS--CHECHEN
REBELS, OR RELIGIOUS
EXTREMISTS.

BUT WHATEVER
DID THIS...

DARK
MOTHER.



SEE YOU SOON,
VAMPIRELLA

YOU
WERE **RIGHT**.
I SHOULD
HAVE STAYED
OUTSIDE.

SCHULD.

IT'S
ME.

AND?

WE NEED
TO TALK, HERR
SCHULD.

I'LL
SEND A
CAR.



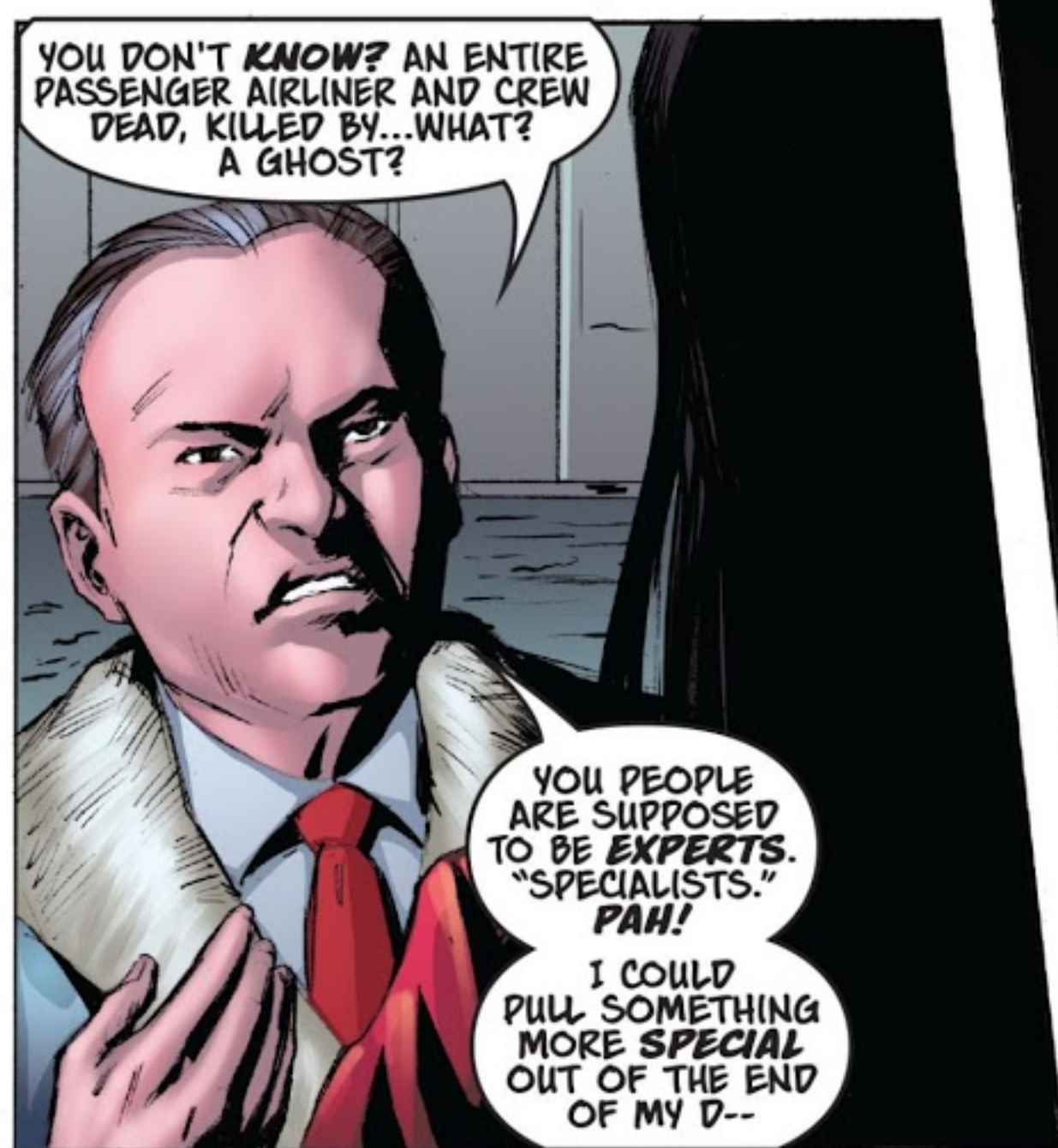
WELL?
WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT DID YOU
FIND?

A MASSACRE.



WHAT...
WHAT KILLED
THEM? WHO
DID THIS?

I DON'T
KNOW YET.



YOU DON'T *KNOW*? AN ENTIRE
PASSENGER AIRLINER AND CREW
DEAD, KILLED BY...WHAT?
A GHOST?

YOU PEOPLE
ARE SUPPOSED
TO BE *EXPERTS*.
"SPECIALISTS."
PAH!

I COULD
PULL SOMETHING
MORE *SPECIAL*
OUT OF THE END
OF MY D--



COMRADE
VASILENKO.

PERHAPS
YOU'D PREFER
TO SOLVE THIS
PROBLEM WITHOUT
OUR HELP.

...NO.

THEN STEP
ASIDE...



...AND LET
ME GET BACK
TO WORK.

SO...
WHAT DO
WE DO
NOW?

YOU HOSE
OUT THE PLANE,
I SUPPOSE.

I CALL THE
PRESIDENT AND
SAY GOODBYE TO
MY *BOLLOCKS*.

HOTEL BALTSHUG KEMPINSKI
MOSCOW
0130 LOCAL TIME

WOW.

THIS IS
VERY NOT
BAD.

THESE
BENEFACTORS
OF YOURS
DON'T SKIMP,
DO THEY?

NO. NOT
USUALLY.

WELCOME.
MAY I BE OF
ASSISTANCE?

YOU SHOULD HAVE
A ROOM FOR MY
ASSOCIATE
AND I?

UNDER
WHAT NAME,
PLEASE?

NORMANDY.
MISS
NORMANDY.

YOU GET
A CODENAME?
I WANT A
CODENAME.

AH, OF
COURSE,
MADAM.

WE HAVE BOOKED YOU IN
THE KREMLIN SUITE.
AND YOU'LL BE
PLEASED TO LEARN THAT
MR. NORMANDY HAS
ALREADY CHECKED
IN ALREADY.

"MR.
NORMANDY?"
WHO THE HELL
IS THAT?

WAIT
HERE.

**MR.
NORMANDY**
AND I WILL
PROBABLY NEED
SOME **ALONE**
TIME.


A woman with long black hair, wearing a red jacket and blue pants, is falling through the air. She has a determined expression. The background is a dark, geometric structure with snow falling around her.

I'M SUPPOSED TO
BE A HUNTER.

BUT EVER SINCE WE
SET FOOT IN RUSSIA,
I'VE FELT LIKE I'M
ONE STEP BEHIND.

THE KILLER'S
MESSAGE TO ME.

AND NOW, SOMEONE
WAITING FOR ME IN THE
HOTEL, AWARE OF AN ALIAS
I HAVEN'T USED IN YEARS.

A close-up of the woman's face, showing her green eyes and a slight smile. She is wearing a yellow earring.

STILL, IT WOULD
BE RUDE NOT
TO SAY HELLO.



MR.
NORMANDY,
I PRESUME.



MISS NORMANDY.
OR IS THAT *MS.*
NORMANDY?

I LOSE
TRACK OF WHAT'S
POLITICALLY
CORRECT THESE
DAYS.



HERR
SCHULD.

JA.
SCHULD, YOUR
OVERWORKED
HANDLER. I
TRUST YOU HAD
A PLEASANT
JOURNEY?

I DON'T FIND
MASS MURDER
PARTICULARLY
PLEASANT, NO.



I EXPECT
NOT.

I BROUGHT
YOU SOME
NEW TOYS.



FORTUNATE THAT YOU AND YOUR
LOVELY ASSISTANT--

SOFIA,
IS IT?

--HAD
NOT YET LEFT
*GERMANY**
WHEN DIRECTOR
VASILENKO
CONTACTED
ME.

I ENVY YOU.
IT'S BEEN TOO LONG
SINCE I VISITED MY
HOMELAND. BUT YOU
KNOW ME. WORK,
WORK, WORK.



I SEE
YOU'VE BEEN
BUSY.

HA!

IDLE
HANDS ARE
THE DEVIL'S
WORKSHOP, MY
DEAR GIRL.

*SEE VAMPIRELLA #11--J.R.



SO? THE AIRPORT?

WHATEVER HIT THE AIRPLANE WASN'T HUMAN. AND IT KNEW I WAS COMING. IT LEFT ME A MESSAGE: "SEE YOU SOON, VAMPIRELLA."

AH. I SEE.



THEN YOU SHOULD SEE **GRIGORIY**.

IF IT GOES BUMP IN THE NIGHT, AND IT'S IN RUSSIA, GRIGORIY KNOWS ABOUT IT.



YOU'LL FIND HIM HERE. I'LL ARRANGE YOUR TRANSPORT WITHIN THE HOUR.

THIS **GRIGORIY** IS ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR... INVESTIGATORS?

STRICTLY SPEAKING, NO. BUT WE HAVE AN **UNDERSTANDING**.



NOT TERRIBLY DIFFERENT THAN OUR ARRANGEMENT, "MISS NORMANDY."

DO GIVE MY REGARDS TO SOFIA. I'LL SHOW MYSELF OUT.



OUTSKIRTS OF TVERSKAYA
OBLAST, RUSSIA
167 KM NORTHWEST
OF MOSCOW
0330 LOCAL TIME



GAH.

HEY, CAN YOU
ASK YOUR SECRET EVIL
OVERLORDS OR WHOEVER
THEY ARE TO SEND US
SOMEPLACE **WARM**
NEXT TIME?

THEY HAVE
MONSTERS IN
FIJI, RIGHT?



I'M SURE
THEY DO,
SOFIA.

IN MY
EXPERIENCE, THEY
HAVE MONSTERS
EVERYWHERE.



THIS IS THE PLACE.

CHARMING.

THIS GRIGORIY GUY HAS A REAL EYE FOR REAL ESTATE.



WE'RE HERE. WHERE IS HE?

THERE'S NOTHING OUT HERE BUT SNOW AND--

AAH JEEESUS!



...MY WHAT BIG EYES YOU HAVE...

GRRRRR



RRRRR



WELCOME,
MY FRIENDS!
WELCOME!



YOU
MUST BE--MISS
NORMANDY,
IS IT

I WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT YOU
HAD A DIFFERENT
NAME. YOU
SEEM QUITE...
FAMILIAR.

NO MATTER,
NO MATTER.



YOU
MUSTN'T PAY
THE BEASTS
ANY MIND.

THEY **LOOK**
FEROCIOUS, BUT
FOR THE MOST
PART, THEY'RE
GENTLE AS
LAMBS.

FOR THE
MOST PART.
HA!



OUR MUTUAL FRIEND, HERR SCHULD, SENDS HIS RESPECTS.



GOOD OLD SCHULD. HE SENDS YOU TO ME BECAUSE OF THE UNFORTUNATE BUSINESS ON THE PLANE IN MOSCOW, YES?

YES, GRIGORIY KNOWS **ALL** ABOUT IT. "GRIGORIY" MEANS "VIGILANT" IN RUSSIAN. DID YOU KNOW THAT?



BUT FIRST, YOU MUST INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR **DELIGHTFUL** LITTLE FRIEND.

SOFIA, YES? HELLOOO, LITTLE SOFIA. GRIGORIY **LIKES** NEW FRIENDS, HA HA!

UH, HI.

SMACK



PERHAPS, IN ALL YOUR **VIGILANCE**, YOU LEARNED WHAT ATTACKED THE PLANE.



WELL, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

ONE HEARS MUCH, IF ONE **LISTENS**.

STILL, INFORMATION LIKE THIS? NOT EASY TO COME BY.



IF YOU KNOW
SCHULD, YOU
KNOW PAYMENT
ISN'T AN
ISSUE.



HA! NO,
THAT'S TRUE.
SCHULD IS VERY
CONCERNED
WITH PAYING
HIS DEBTS,
YES.

AND IF
YOU KNOW
GRIGORIY,
YOU KNOW HE
ALWAYS HAS
ANSWERS!

NAMES,
LOCATIONS. JUST
LIKE **THIS** ONE.

A BLOOD CULT.
MUCH MORE ACTIVE IN
RUSSIA, YES? ESPECIALLY
SINCE SOMETHING
MAJOR HAPPENED A FEW
MONTHS AGO? IN
SEATTLE?

**SEE VAMPIRELLA: CROWN OF WORMS.--J.R.*



IF YOU KNOW
SCHULD, YOU
KNOW PAYMENT
ISN'T AN
ISSUE.

GIVE
ME THE
NAME.




OH NO.
NO, NO
NO NO.

**FIRST, WE
TALK ABOUT
GRIGORIY'S
PAYMENT.**

YOU SEE,
GRIGORIY THINKS
MAYBE "MISS
NORMANDY" IS
MORE VALUABLE
TO PEOPLE **DEAD**,
YOU SEE.



MAYBE MISS
NORMANDY IS
A LOT HARDER
TO KILL THAN
YOU THINK.



MAYBE SO,
MAYBE NOT.

BUT GRIGORIY
DID NOT **CLAW** HIS
WAY OUT OF HELL JUST
TO LET THE LIKES OF
YOU SEND HIM
BACK.

SCHULD
THINKS I'M A FOOL,
YES? SENDING
ONE HELLBORN TO
KILL ANOTHER?

I THINK NOT,
VAMPIRELLA.

NO,
I THINK
NOT.

TO BE CONTINUED

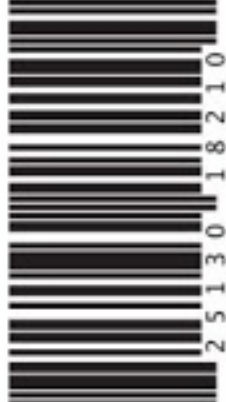
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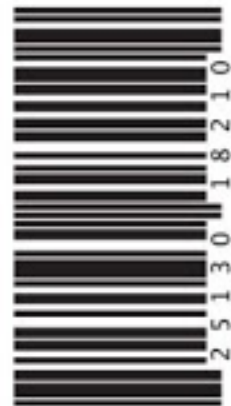
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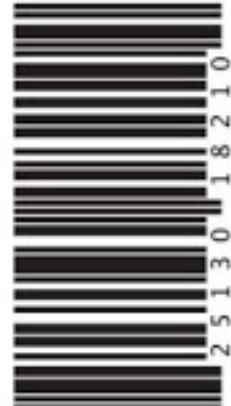
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Andrade



OUTSKIRTS OF TVERSKAYA
OBLAST, RUSSIA
167 KM NORTHWEST OF MOSCOW
0345 LOCAL TIME



TELL
THEM TO
BACK OFF,
GRIGORY.

DO IT
NOW.

HMPH.

NO, NO.

NOT FOR YOU TO
BE GIVING ORDERS,
MAKING DEMANDS,
LITTLE HELLCHILD.

UNLESS
YOU WANT TO
SEE YOUR PLUCKY
LITTLE PET TORN
IN HALF, YES?

--GET OFF
ME, YOU SONS
OF B--

EVENTS JUST MIGHT
BE SPINNING A LITTLE
OUT OF CONTROL.



WE CAME TO YOU IN
GOOD FAITH, GRIGORY.
SCHULD SENT US,
AND YOU KNOW
WHO AND WHAT HE
REPRESENTS.

HA! I'M A DEMON,
VAMPIRELLA. WHAT
POSSIBLE USE
IS "GOOD FAITH"
TO ME?

SCHULD MAY
HAVE MONEY AND
RESOURCES, BUT
HE USES THEM TO KILL
MY KIND, WITH YOU
AS HIS WEAPON.



AAAAH!



HIS DEADLIEST
WEAPON, GRIGORY.
IF I WERE HERE FOR
YOU, YOU'D BE
BACK IN THE PIT
ALREADY.

OF COURSE,
YOU *COULD*
LET HER
GO.

AND IF
YOU DO, WELL...
I'D OWE YOU
A FAVOR,
WOULDN'T I?



...YES. YES,
I SUPPOSE YOU
WOULD.



VERY WELL.
BOYS!
RELEASE
HER.



JERKS.
NEXT TIME, I'M
GONNA NEUTER
YOU.

GRAARRA

GRRR



ENOUGH
FOREPLAY.

YOU KNOW
WHY WE'RE
HERE.

A KILLER HAS
JUST ARRIVED
IN RUSSIA.

WHAT OF IT?
THIS COUNTRY
BREEDS SERIAL
KILLERS LIKE
WEEDS.

NOT LIKE
THIS ONE.

AND
WHAT MAKES
THIS ONE SO
SPECIAL?

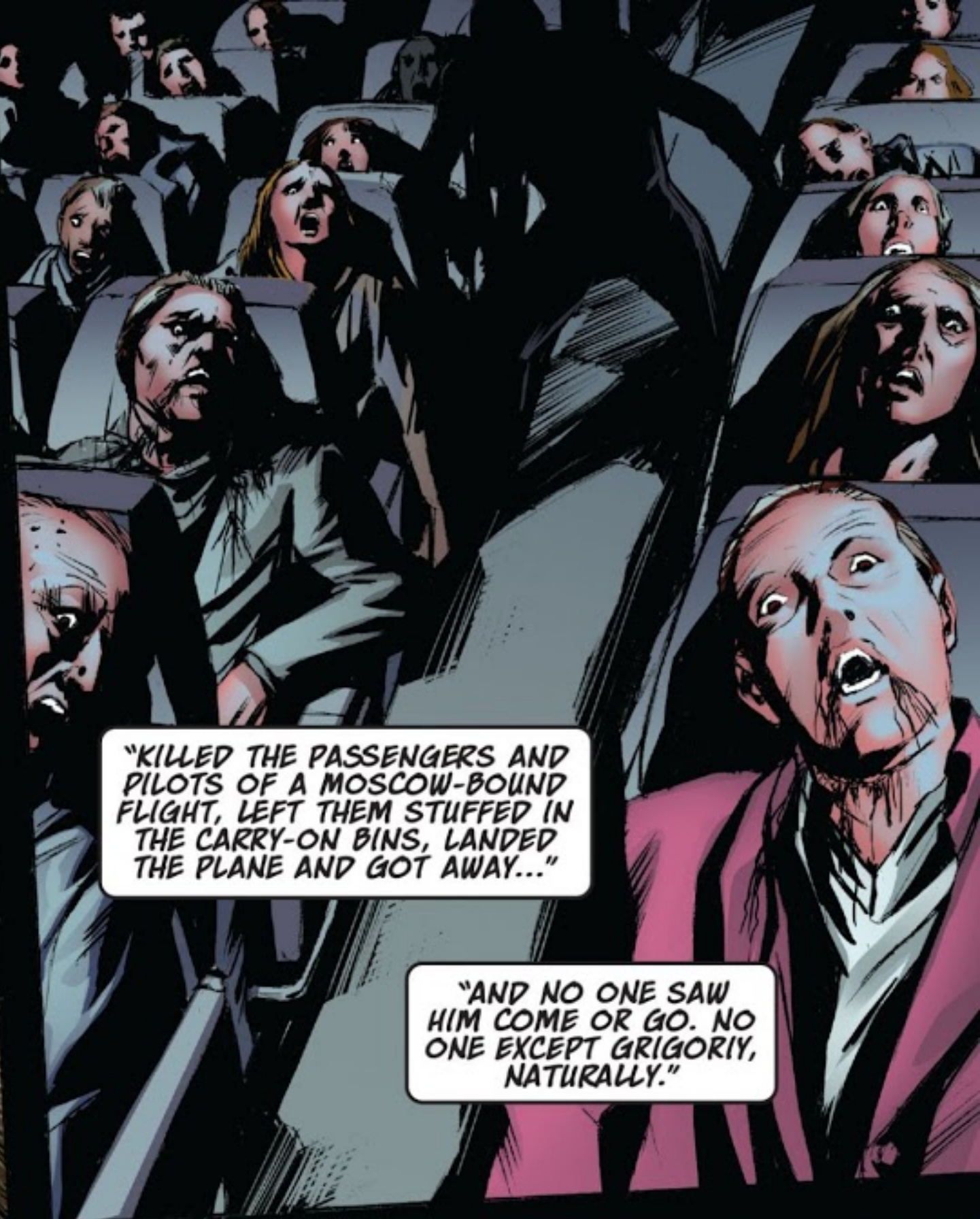
"SEE YOU
SOON, VAMPIRELLA."
SCRAWLED IN THE
BLOOD OF HIS
VICTIMS.



COME, BOYS!

I'VE HEARD OF THIS ONE. HE'S SPECIAL, YOUR NEW FRIEND.

SLUPP



"KILLED THE PASSENGERS AND PILOTS OF A MOSCOW-BOUND FLIGHT, LEFT THEM STUFFED IN THE CARRY-ON BINS, LANDED THE PLANE AND GOT AWAY..."

"AND NO ONE SAW HIM COME OR GO. NO ONE EXCEPT GRIGORIY, NATURALLY."



ENOUGH, HELLSPAWN.

MY PATIENCE ISN'T LIMITLESS--



HRRRRRRR



NOR IS MINE.

REST ASSURED, WHEN I DEMAND REPAYMENT OF THE DEBT YOU OWE ME FOR THIS, YOU'LL REGRET EVER LAYING HANDS ON ME.

"HIS NAME WAS
VAIRO, A CATHOLIC
BISHOP FROM
POZZOLES, IN 1538."

"THE YEAR OF
OUR LORD."



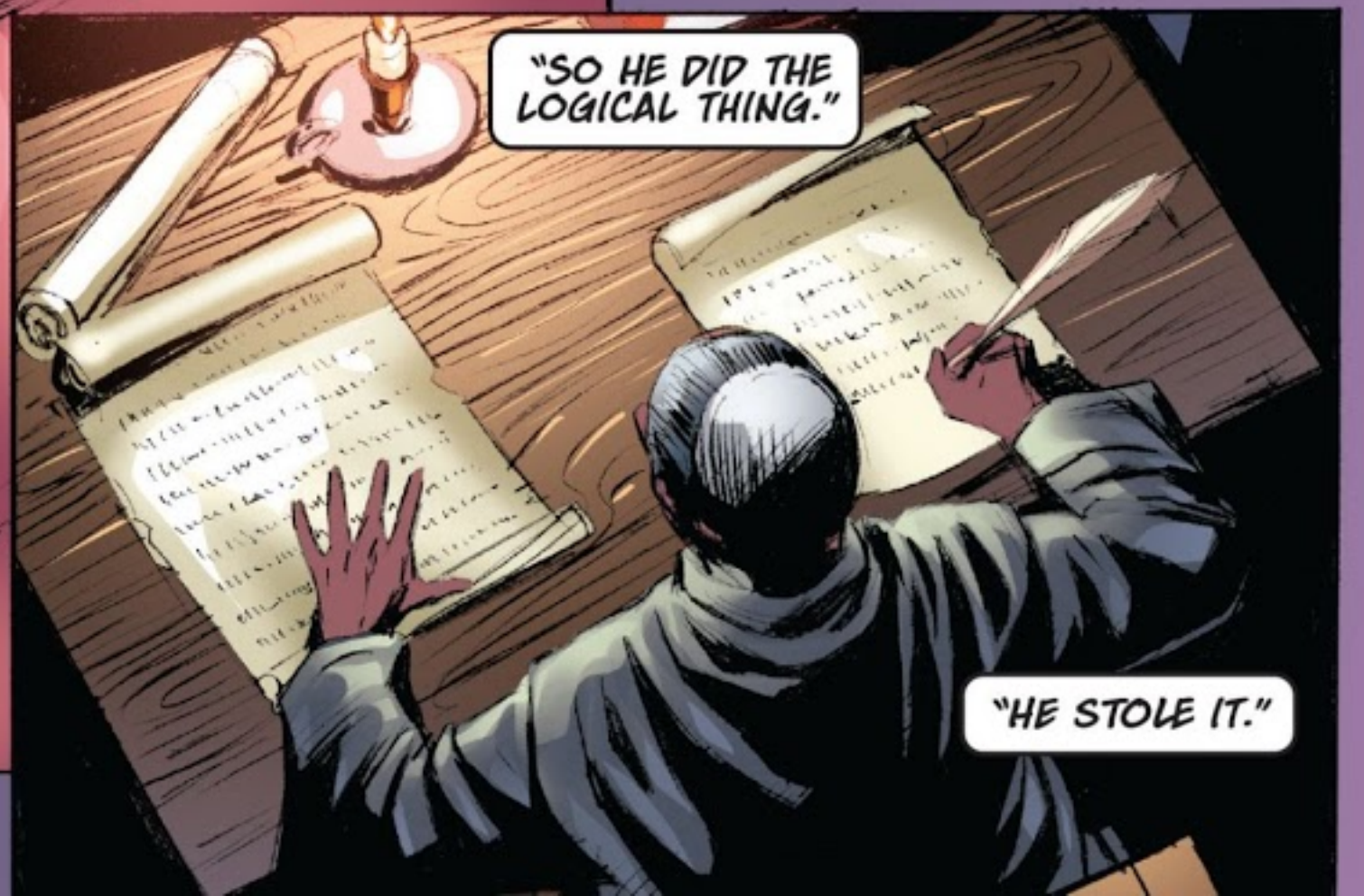
"AN EXPERT OCCULTIST
WAS OUR GOOD BISHOP,
THE AUTHOR OF AN EARLY
GRIMOIRE, *DE FASCINO
DE LIBRE TRES*."



"ONE OF THE FIRST
HUMANS TO TRULY
UNDERSTAND THE LURE
OF HELL, THE
'FASCINATION,' AS HE
CALLED IT, OF EVIL."



"BUT NOT THE LAST. ONE OF
VAIRO'S PRIESTS, DOMENICO
GIACOMINI, ENVIED HIS
BISHOP'S TALENTS AND THE
ATTENTION HIS WORK
RECEIVED FROM ROME."



"SO HE DID THE
LOGICAL THING."

"HE STOLE IT."

IT'S A NEW
CHAPTER OF AN
OLD STORY,
VAMPIRELLA.

NO HUMAN
KILLER COULD
HAVE DONE
WHAT YOURS
DID.

NOT
WITHOUT...
ASSISTANCE.

"BUT HE DID MORE THAN THAT. HE IMPROVED UPON IT, CONSTRUCTING APOCRYPHA BEYOND VAIRO'S NARROW WORKS."



"WHERE VAIRO DEFINED THE POWER OF HELL'S FASCINATION, GIACOMINI WAS DETERMINED TO USE THAT POWER FOR HIS OWN ENDS."

"GATHERING LIKE-MINDED CLERGY, HE FORMED IL CONSIGLIO DEI VERMI-- THE COUNCIL OF WORMS."



"AND THEY SUMMONED A DEMON."

"THE COUNCIL SURVIVED IN SECRET FOR NEARLY A HUNDRED YEARS, THE APOCRYPHA PASSING FROM PRIEST TO PRIEST."



"UNTIL POPE CLEMENT X LEARNED OF THE CABAL OF BLASPHEMERS WITHIN HIS RANKS, AND TOOK DRAMATIC ACTION."

"THEY WERE CALLED CESTUS DEI--THE FIST OF GOD--AND THEY ANSWERED ONLY TO THE PONTIFF."



"AND, IN THE HILLS ABOVE POZZOLES, THEY TRACKED DOWN THE COUNCIL OF WORMS, AND KILLED THEM."

"ALL SAVE ONE, WHO MANAGED TO SKULK OFF INTO THE NIGHT, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN."



"AND GIACOMINI'S WORKS WERE BELIEVED TO BE DESTROYED BY CESTUS DEI."



YEAH, THIS IS WHY I DON'T WATCH THE **HISTORY CHANNEL**.

WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THE BASTARD WHO BUTCHERED THE PEOPLE ON THE PLANE?



GAH!

YOUR KILLER ACHIEVED HIS BLOODY MASTERPIECE WITH THE AID OF KNOWLEDGE FROM GIACOMINI'S APOCRYPHA.



THE APOCRYPHA WASN'T DESTROYED, WAS IT?

OF COURSE NOT. CESTUS DEI PUT MUCH OF IT TO THE TORCH, BUT FRAGMENTS REMAIN, SCATTERED AROUND THE GLOBE.

AND YOUR BOY HAS STUDIED AT LEAST SOME OF THOSE REMAINS.



A REMORSELESS KILLER WHO CAN TRAFFIC WITH DEMONS, LOOKING FOR THE REMAINING PASSAGES OF THE APOCRYPHA.

AH, IT WARMS THE HEART. BUT LEAVE IT TO GRIGORIY.



I MIGHT JUST KNOW WHERE THE NEAREST FRAGMENT IS...

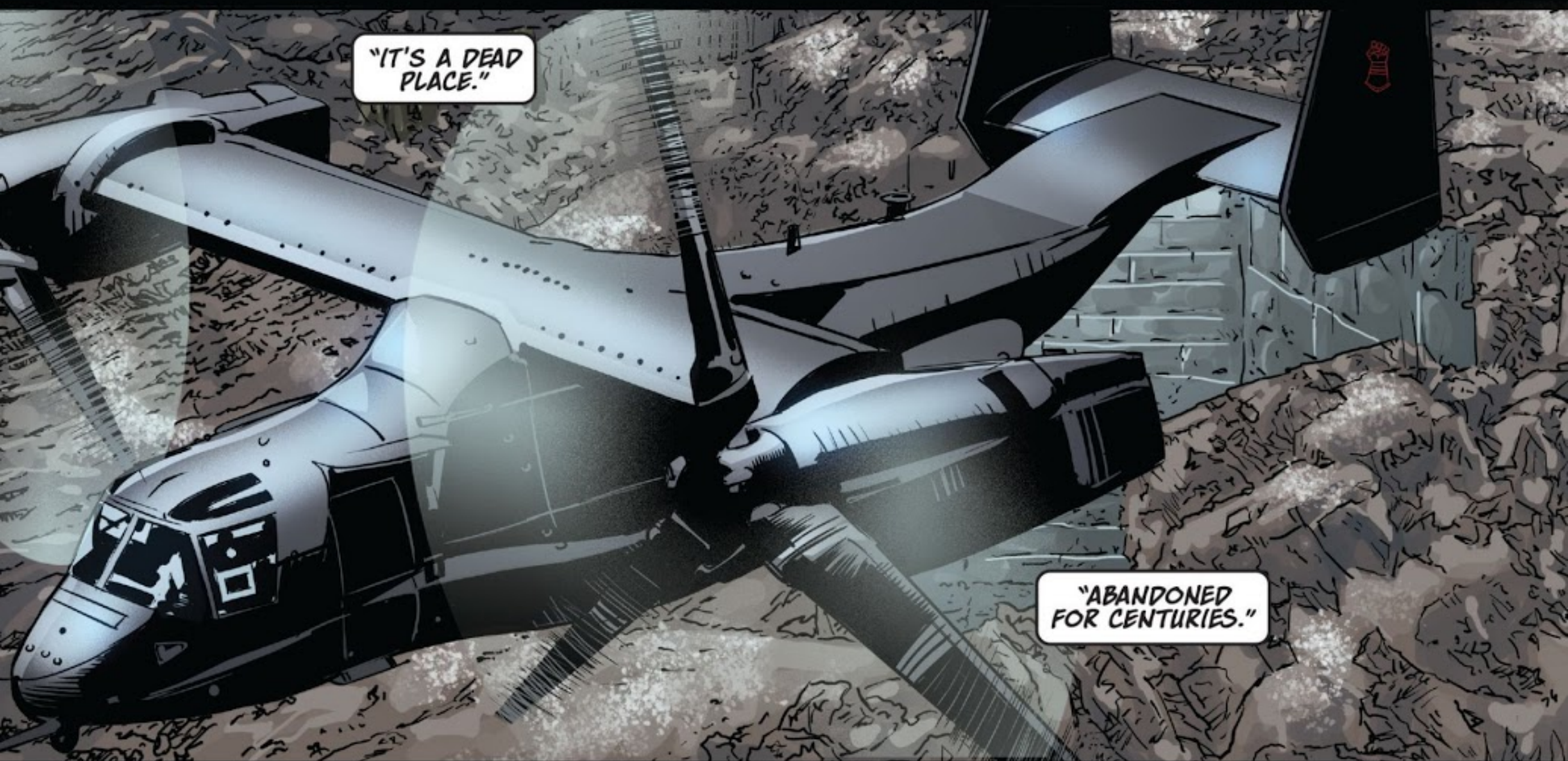


...AND I'M SURE YOU'RE DYING FOR ME TO TELL YOU, YES?

TURKEY/ARMENIA BORDER REGION
APPROX. 45KM SE OF KARS, TURKEY
8,000 FEET, DESCENDING
0540 LOCAL TIME

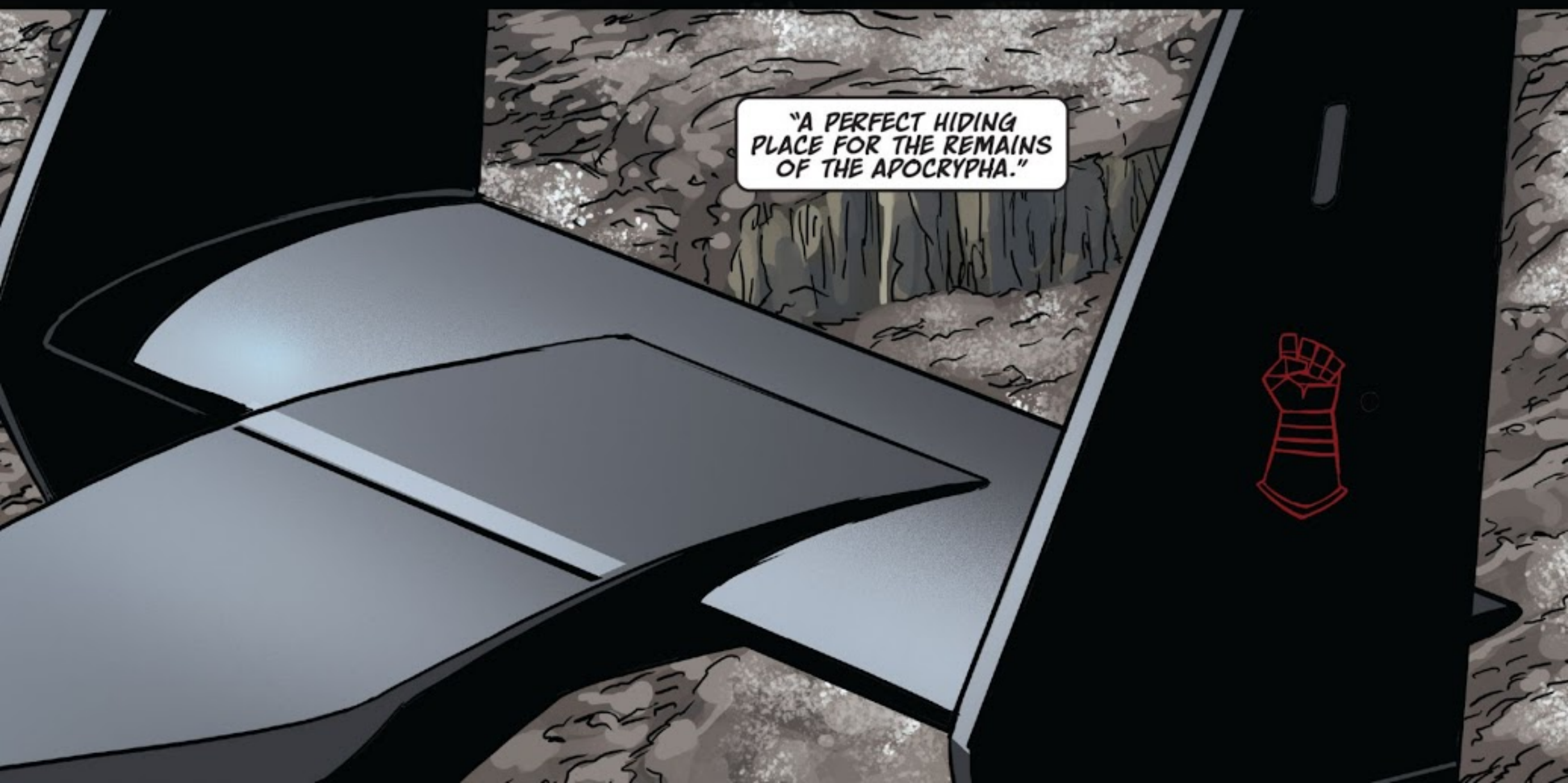


"IT'S A DEAD
PLACE."



"ABANDONED
FOR CENTURIES."

"A PERFECT HIDING
PLACE FOR THE REMAINS
OF THE APOCRYPHA."





NO GOOD
CAN COME
OF THIS.

SO YOU'VE
SAID. SEVERAL
TIMES.

IT'S WORTH
REPEATING.



MAYBE
YOU SHOULD'VE
STAYED IN MOSCOW,
SCHILD. YOU USUALLY
LEAVE THE BLOODY
WORK TO OTHERS.



PERHAPS.



SO WHY
DIDN'T YOU STAY
BEHIND?

A GOOD
QUESTION,
CHILD.

I DISLIKE
FIELDWORK
TREMENDOUSLY.



BUT **NEITHER** OF
YOU READ MEDIEVAL
ITALIAN, NOR SPEAK
ANY OF THE LOCAL
LANGUAGES.

AND I HAVE A...
FEELING.
THAT I NEEDED
TO COME.

SO, HERE
I AM.

Gulp



SO WHAT'S HER STORY, PADRE? SHE WON'T TELL ME ANYTHING. WHAT IS SHE?

ANOTHER EXCELLENT QUESTION.



THE HARD TRUTH IS THAT SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHO SHE IS OR WHERE SHE REALLY CAME FROM.

CAN YOU IMAGINE? IT WOULD DRIVE MOST PEOPLE UTTERLY INSANE.



"SHE REMEMBERS TWO COMPLETELY DISTINCT PASTS, AND NOT EVEN SHE KNOWS WHICH IS REAL."

"IN ONE MEMORY SHE'S A CREATURE FROM ANOTHER WORLD, LOST AMONGST US FRAIL HUMANS. IN ANOTHER, SHE WAS CREATED BY A SUPERNATURAL FIGURE TO BATTLE EVIL. AN AVATAR OF REDEMPTION."

"BOTH MEMORIES FEEL COMPLETELY REAL TO HER, YOU SEE. MONSTER OR SAVIOR? SOMETHING MORE THAN THAT? OR LESS?"

"SO, SHE **FIGHTS**. ALWAYS ON THE MOVE, ALWAYS ON THE HUNT."

"BECAUSE TO **STOP**-- TO CONFRONT HERSELF -- IF ONLY FOR A **MOMENT**, WOULD **PARALYZE** HER."



AND SHE
WOULD BE LOST
FOREVER.

JESUS.

SHE THINKS
SHE'S A MONSTER,
YOU SEE. AND
PERHAPS SHE
IS.

BUT, IN SPITE
OF IT ALL, SHE'S A
GOOD PERSON,
CHILD.

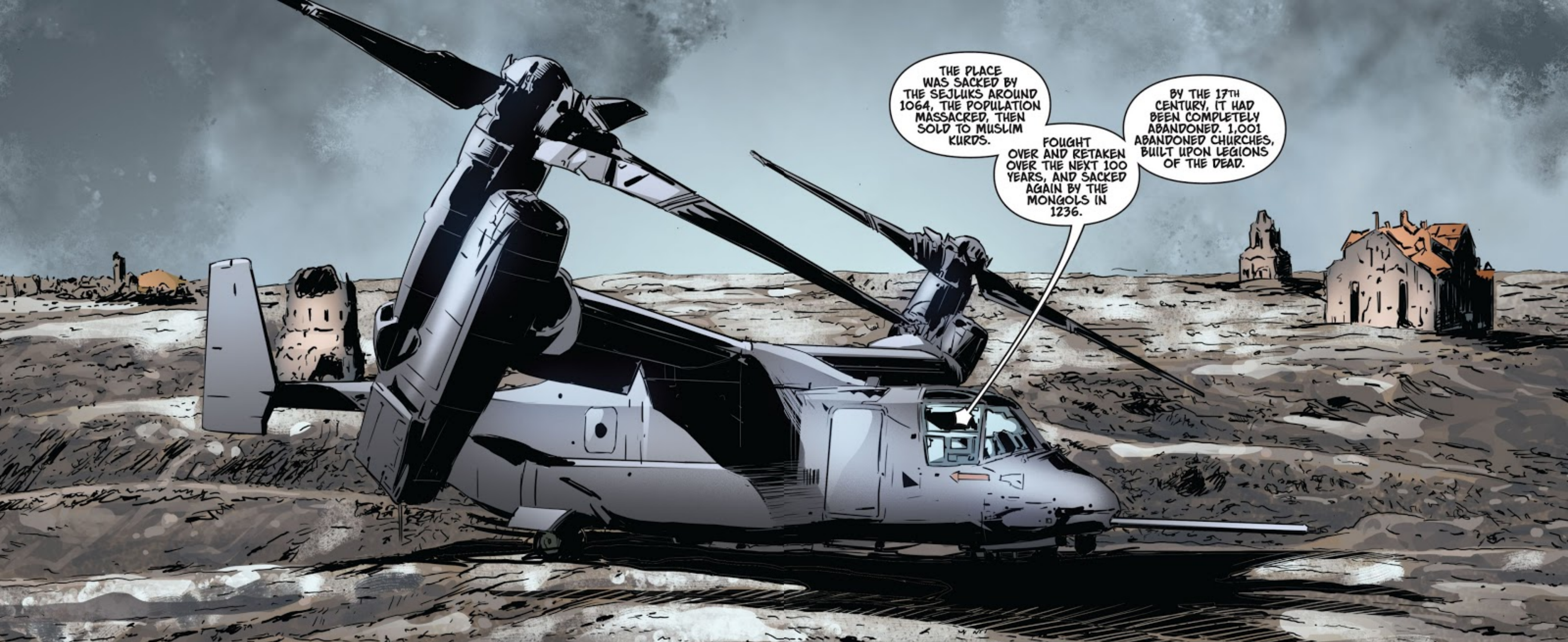
AND SHE'S
LUCKY TO HAVE
YOU AS A
FRIEND.

NOW, I SENSE
WE'RE ALMOST
TO OUR
DESTINATION...

"THIS MIGHT BE A
GOOD TIME FOR A
QUICK PRAYER."







THE PLACE WAS SACKED BY THE SEJLUKS AROUND 1064, THE POPULATION MASSACRED, THEN SOLD TO MUSLIM KURDS.

FOUGHT OVER AND RETAKEN OVER THE NEXT 100 YEARS, AND SACKED AGAIN BY THE MONGOLS IN 1236.

BY THE 17TH CENTURY, IT HAD BEEN COMPLETELY ABANDONED. 1,001 ABANDONED CHURCHES, BUILT UPON LEGIONS OF THE DEAD.



IT'S A FASCINATING PLACE, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?



I'LL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT, HERR SCHULD.

LOOKS LIKE A DUMP TO ME.
AND COLD AS HELL.



TRUE. AND IT LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE HERE A WHILE YET.

BUT THE GOOD LORD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES...



...SO HELP YOURSELVES, GENTLEMEN.
AND THE DEVIL TAKE THE HINDMOST.



0600 LOCAL TIME.

COLD. BORED.

BORED
AND COLD AND
BORED AND...

0600 LOCAL TIME.

COLD. BORED.

BORED
AND COLD AND
BORED AND...

0645 LOCAL TIME.

SSSSSOFIA

HUH? VEE?

0645 LOCAL TIME.

SSSSSOFIA

HUH? VEE?

SSSSSSSTAY! SOFIAAAAA

SSTAY HERE

VEE?
IS THAT
YOU?

DON'T BELONG
OUT THERE

CLOSE YOUR
EYESSSSSSSS

RESSSSSSSSSSST

HO-KAY.
CREEPY VOICES
FROM NOWHERE.
NEVER
A
GOOD SIGN.

SSSTAY!
SOFFFFFIAAAAAA

SSSSSSST

[illegible]

SSSSSSSTAY WITH UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU



AAAAAA!!

NNNNNEVER
LEAVE
USSSSSSS

SSSSTAY
FOREVERRRRRR

BELONG WITH USSSSSSS
INNNN THE GOLD
DIRRRRRRRRT

LET ME
GOOO!

LET ME
GO!



FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF



0650 LOCAL TIME



HUFFFF
I WARNED
THEM.

I TOLD
THEM NO
GOOD WOULD
COME OF
THIS.



0710 LOCAL TIME

YOU CAN FEEL
THE HISTORY IN
THIS PLACE.

AGE HAS SETTLED
LIKE A LEAD
WEIGHT ON EVERY
SPECK OF DUST,
EVERY CRUMBLING
BIT OF MASONRY.



IT WEARS THE
SCREAMS OF THE
DYING IN IT'S
VERY BONES.



BUT ASIDE FROM
THE BURDEN OF IT'S
TROUBLED PAST...



...THERE'S JUST
NOTHING HERE.



NO BIRDS. NO
STRAY ANIMALS.
EVEN THE WORMS
HAVE ABANDONED
THIS PLACE. IT'S
JUST...

...EMPTY?

LET
YOUR LIES END
VAMPIRELLA...
CURSED BE
YOUR NAME.

THE VOICE IS
NEITHER SOFIA,
NOR SCHULD.

THERE'S NO SCENT
OF BLOOD OR SKIN,
JUST DRY DUST AND
OLD STONE.

YOU ADORN
YOURSELF IN THE
GAUDY ORNAMENTS
OF THE HUMANS.

BUT IT IS A LIE.
AND THERE WILL BE
NO LIES BETWEEN
US, HELL-CHILD.

MY SUDDEN...
TRANSFORMATION MAY BE
AN ILLUSION, BUT IT FEELS
COMPLETELY REAL.

IN MY HEART, I KNOW
IT'S REAL. IT'S
PRACTICALLY HUMMING
WITH THE POWERFUL
MAGIC BEHIND IT.

YES,
VAMPIRELLA.
COME
CLOSER.

THE TEXTURE OF THE CLOTH,
THE SOUR, COPPERY TANG OF
OLD BLOOD DRIED INTO IT'S
FIBERS. IT'S NO FAKE--IT'S
SOMETHING I THOUGHT I'D
SET ASIDE LONG AGO.

AS YOU
WISH, GHOST.

THIS IS NOT WHAT
I CHOSE. THIS IS
NOT WHO I AM.

AND IF THIS
CHANGE IS TO
BE FORCED
UPON ME...

...IT WILL NOT BE
WITHOUT A HELL
OF A FIGHT.

GREETINGS,
O CHILD OF BLOOD
AND BRIMSTONE.
WELCOME
TO MY HOME.

AND JUST
WHAT ARE YOU
SUPPOSED
TO BE?

MERELY
A HUMBLE SPIRIT,
PERDITION'S
CHILD.

BUT MY BRASS
CLAWS HAVE TORN
THE FLESH FROM
THE BONES OF
THE GUILTY.

MY IRON
TEETH HAVE RIPPED
THE HEARTS FROM
THE UNREPENTANT.

BUT THE
GUILT **YOU** CARRY,
THOU DRINKER OF
BLOOD, THOU
MURDERER OF
KIN...

...SHALL
BE A MOST
WORTHY FEAST
INDEED.

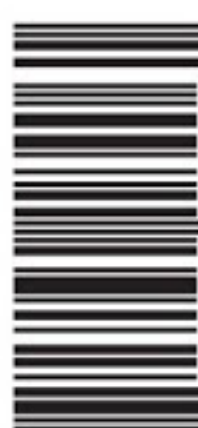
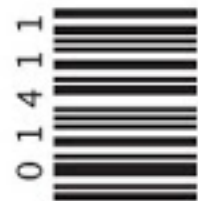
TO BE CONTINUED

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VAMPIRELLA®



RATED T+
\$3.99 US
DIRECT SALES
DYNAMITE.NET



REVIEWS
2011

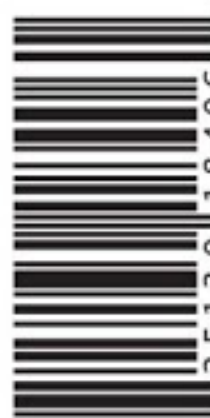
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VAMPIRELLA®



- Alexander
Vinicius
Andrade

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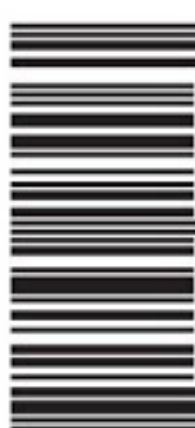
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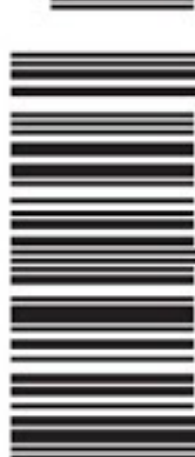
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THIS PLACE IS
CALLED ANI.

SITUATED RIGHT
ON THE BORDER
BETWEEN TURKEY
AND ARMENIA.

ONCE, A TEEMING
CITY TO RIVAL
CONSTANTINOPLE.

NOW ABANDONED,
FOLLOWING
CENTURIES OF
CONQUEST AND
GENOCIDE.

NOTHING LEFT
BEHIND BUT 1,001
RUINED CHURCHES.

WHATEVER
IT IS YOU WANT
TO TELL ME, YOU
SHOULD SPIT
IT OUT.

AND THE
UNQUIET DEAD.

RUINS OF THE RED
CHURCH, CITY OF ANI
0710 LOCAL TIME

I'VE
GOT THINGS
TO DO.


AH. MORE OF
YOUR KIN MUST
FALL, YES?

BY FANG AND
CLAW, NOW. NO
MORE BLADES,
NO MORE
BULLETS.

AL BASTI
KNOWS. YOU
REEK OF THE
BLOOD OF YOUR
VICTIMS.

I CAME HERE IN PURSUIT OF A
SERIAL KILLER, ONE POSSESSING
FRAGMENTS OF THE **GIACOMINI
APOCRYPHA**--A LONG-LOST
MYSTICAL TOME AND A
GUIDEBOOK FOR TRAFFICKING
WITH DEMONS.

THE LAST FRAGMENT IS HERE
SOMEWHERE, IN THIS CITY OF
GHOSTS, AND IF OUR **FACELESS
KILLER** FINDS IT, HE COULD VERY
WELL BECOME HELL'S OWN SAINT
OF **MURDER**.




AND THAT, I
SIMPLY WILL
NOT ALLOW.

YOU STINK
OF GUILT.

RUN FROM
IT ALL YOU LIKE,
LOST CHILD, YOU
CAN **NEVER**
ESCAPE IT.

SHE CAN'T HURT ME.
SHE'S NOTHING BUT
A GHOST, A SHADE.




A LOST CHILD,
DENYING WHO AND
WHAT YOU ARE. BUT
AL BASTI **KNOWS**.

HERE IN THE
DUST AND BONES
OF THIS DEAD PLACE,
AL BASTI **SEES**.

BUT AL BASTI IS
POWERFUL, MORE
THAN MOST. MORE
THAN A MERE SPIRIT.

WITH A WHISPER,
MY WEAPONS WERE
SIMPLY GONE. MY
APPEARANCE ALTERED
BACK TO SOMETHING
I DESPERATELY WANTED
TO PUT BEHIND ME.



AND THERE'S
JUST **SOMETHING**
ABOUT HER.



SEES YOUR
FATE. SEES
YOUR **FEAR**.

SEES YOUR
DOOM.

LOOK CLOSER,
VAMPIRELLA.

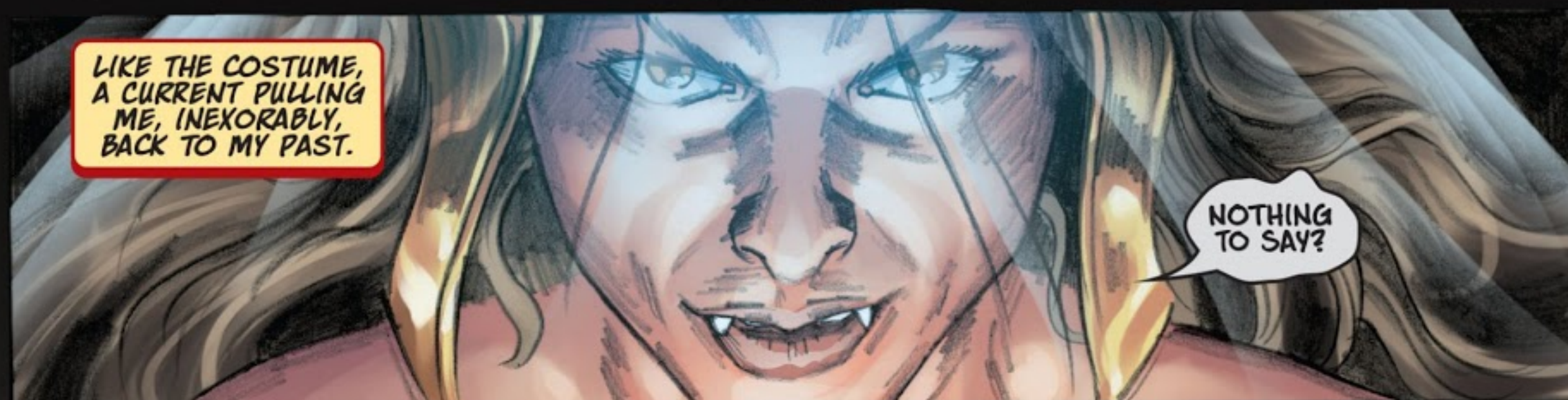
WHAT DO
YOU SEE?

**SOMETHING
FAMILIAR.**



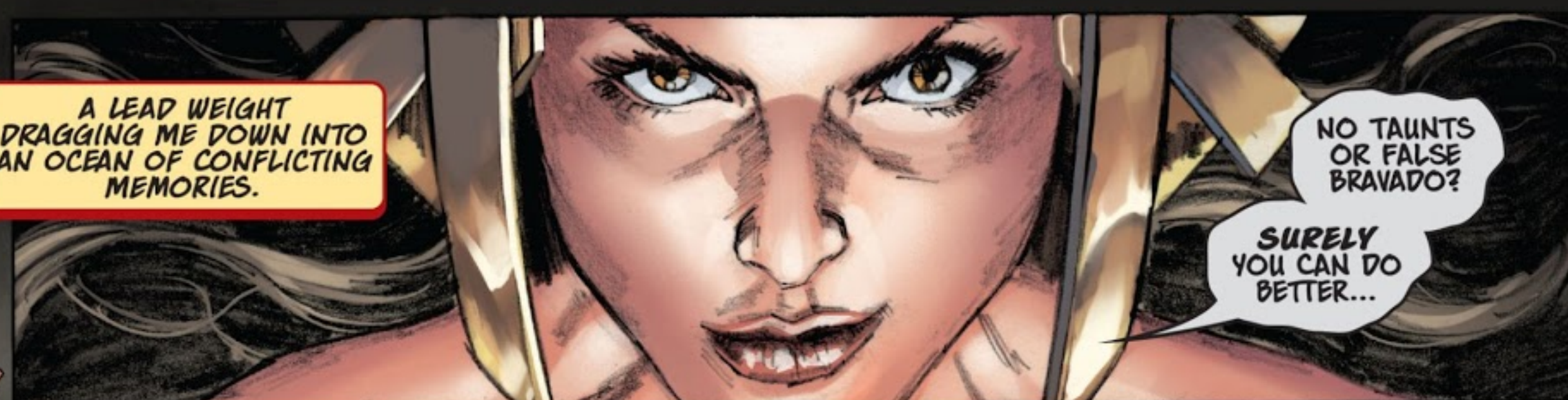
A PRESENCE I'VE
FELT BEFORE.

WELL?



LIKE THE COSTUME,
A CURRENT PULLING
ME, INEXORABLY,
BACK TO MY PAST.

NOTHING
TO SAY?



A LEAD WEIGHT
DRAGGING ME DOWN INTO
AN OCEAN OF CONFLICTING
MEMORIES.

NO TAUNTS
OR FALSE
BRAVADO?

SURELY
YOU CAN DO
BETTER...



...TO GREET
YOUR BELOVED
MOTHER.

HER SULPHUR-
AND-BRIMSTONE
SCENT PERFUMES
THE DUSTY AIR.

HER SMILE
GLEAMING LIKE
BLOOD ON STEEL,
LIKE RAZORS ON
FLESH.



HER VOICE, A
CHOIR OF THE
SHRIEKING
DAMNED.

THE MATRIARCH
OF HELL'S VILE
LEGIONS:

LILITH.

ELSEWHERE.

≡KOFF
KOFF≡

GOD,
SOFIA...

≡KOFF≡

...WHAT THE
HELL ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

COME ON,
COME ON,
WHERE IS
IT?

OKAY.

OKAY,
LOOK.

I'M GOING
TO TURN THIS
FLASHLIGHT
ON.

AND WHEN
I DO...

....IT WOULD BE
AWESOME IF THE
ARMY OF DEAD GUYS
THAT PULLED ME
DOWN HERE AREN'T
STANDING AROUND
BEING CREEPY.

KLIK

HMPH.



THANKS FOR
NOTHING,
GUYS.

win
win



SSSSSOFFIA

SSSSSOFFIA

YOU
COULDDDDDD
SSSSSTAY

BETTER HEEEEEEERE
BADDDDD THINGSSSS COMING



"STAY HERE WITH THE
DEAD THINGS." GOT
IT. YOU CAN GIVE IT
A REST NOW.

YOU.

IF YOU'RE
NOT GONNA KILL ME,
HOW ABOUT YOU QUIT
ACTING LIKE EXTRAS IN
A HAMMER FILM AND
JUST POINT THE WAY
OUT OF HERE.



THANK
YOU.



VAMPIRES,
WEREWOLVES, THE ODD
DEMON OR TENTACULAR
HORROR FROM BEYOND
SPACE AND TIME.



LIKE A
BUNCH OF
SKELETONS
ARE EVEN
CLOSE TO
THAT.



EXPECT
ME TO BE
AFRAID OF THE
DARK NEXT.





YOU DISAPPOINT
ME, CHILD. YOU
ONCE HAD SO MUCH
PROMISE.

A CHILD OF
HELLFIRE, OF
DAMNED BLOOD,
OF STARK
BEAUTY.



NOW LOOK
AT YOU.
WHERE HAS
THAT LOVELY
CHILD OF OLD
GONE?



YOU WERE
TO MEANT BE MY
REDEMPTION.

MY EXIT
FROM THE
PIT.

BUT YOU'VE
LEFT NOTHING
BUT **FAILURE** IN
YOUR WAKE.

YOUR HUMAN
ALLIES? DEAD OR
DAMNED. INSANITY
AND DEATH ARE DRAWN
TO YOU LIKE A
MAGNET.



AND THE
EVIL I **CREATED**
YOU TO STAMP
OUT?

IT FLOURISHES
NOW LIKE **NEVER**
BEFORE.

SHUT UP.
SHUT UP.
SHUT UP.



SHUT
UP.



HER WORDS
DRIP IN MY EAR.

SOFT AND
CLOYING.

THAT'S MY
GIRL.



POISON HONEY,
DRIPPING ON
BLOODSTAINED
VELVET.

I COULD
NEVER HAVE
COME THIS
FAR WITHOUT
YOU.



AND PART OF ME
STIRS, UNCOILING LIKE
A RESTLESS SERPENT,
ADMITTING THERE'S
TRUTH TO THE
WITCH'S WORDS.

AH.

WHERE ARE MY
ALLIES? WHERE ARE
THE HUMANS I HAVE
SACRIFICED SO MUCH
TO PROTECT?



FOUND
YOU.



SOFIA STAYED BEHIND
AT MY URGING, BUT
WHAT OF SCHULD?

MY LIAISON WITH THE
VATICAN'S COVERT ACTION
UNIT, CESTUS DEI.

AT LAST.



WHO HAS SENT ME
OUT INTO THE TEETH
OF THE DRAGON
COUNTLESS TIMES...

...WHERE IS
HE NOW?



I'M ALONE.
PARALYZED.

AND YOUR
PATHETIC ATTEMPT
TO LOVE A HUMAN?
LAUGHABLE,
WERE IT NOT SUCH
A TRAGIC WASTE.

LORDS OF DARKNESS,
HAVE I NOT GIVEN
ENOUGH?



CHNNNNK

SO, LITTLE
GIRL, IT'S TIME
TO RING DOWN
THE CURTAIN.

I WILLINGLY STAND
AGAINST THE RISING TIDE
OF EVIL AND MADNESS.
I HAVE SACRIFICED HOPE,
AND LOVE, AND ALL
SENSE OF SELF.



YOUR
TIME IS
DONE.

BACK TO
NOTHINGNESS
FOR YOU,
SOULLESS
THING.



AND MAY THE
BOTTOMLESS,
SCREAMING VOID HIDE
YOUR SHAME AND
FAILURE FROM MY
SIGHT.

NOT EVEN SURE IF MY
MEMORIES--OF A HELLISH
WORLD THAT MAY NOT EVEN
BE REAL, AND OF THIS
CREATURE WHO CLAIMS TO
BE MY MOTHER--ARE MY
OWN.

A HOLLOW VESSEL,
BEARING THE BURDEN
OF OTHERS' SINS.

JUST STOP
FIGHTING, AND
YOU WILL KNOW
OBLIVION.

NO MORE
STRUGGLE.
NO MORE
FAILURE.

MMMMNNNGH!

A CEASE TO
POINTLESS BATTLE,
CHILD. ISN'T
THAT WHAT YOU
DESIRE?

YES.

GODS AND
DEVILS HELP ME,
I DO WANT THAT.

JUST THE COOL,
WELCOMING PEACE
OF THE GRAVE.

?!

BUT IF I'VE
LEARNED
ANYTHING...

I HAVE BLINDED
THE UNBORN OF THE
UNPUNISHED.

I HAVE CRUSHED
THE LIFE FROM THE
OFFSPRING OF THE
DAMNED, ALL TO FEED
ON THEIR WELL-
EARNED GUILT.

...IT'S THAT
DARKNESS HOLDS
ONLY LIES.

GGGGGGGGHHH!

SHHHLLUPPP

ALL A LIE. ALL
AN ILLUSION.

A VISION CONJURED
UP BY AN UNCLEAN
SPIRIT. PRYING MY
SECRET FEARS
FROM THE DEPTHS
OF MY SOUL.

BUT YOU,
O CHILD OF
HELL...

YOU ARE
THE FINEST DELICACY
I HAVE ENCOUNTERED
THROUGH THE LONG
CENTURIES.

FINDING THE CHINK
IN MY ARMOR, AND
EFFORTLESSLY
SLIDING THE BLADE
HOME.



BLEEDING ME.

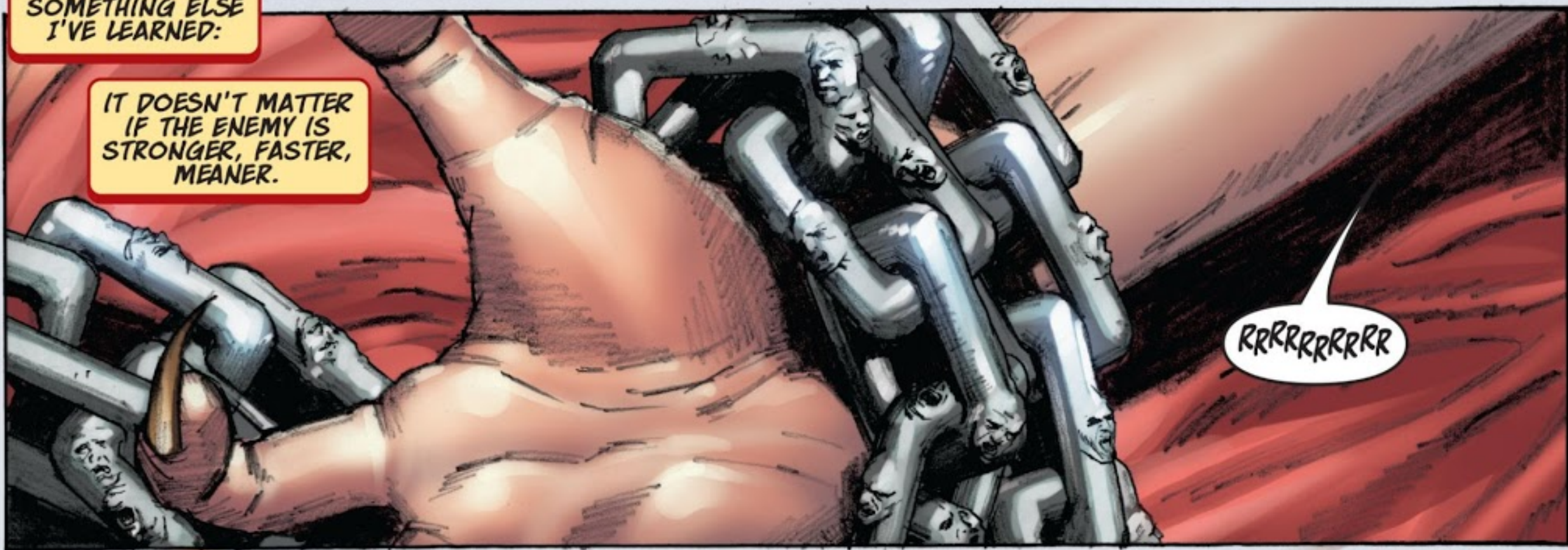


WEAKENING
ME.

RRRRRRRRRR

THERE'S
SOMETHING ELSE
I'VE LEARNED:

IT DOESN'T MATTER
IF THE ENEMY IS
STRONGER, FASTER,
MEANER.



RRRRRRRRRR

THE ONE WHO WINS
THE BATTLE...

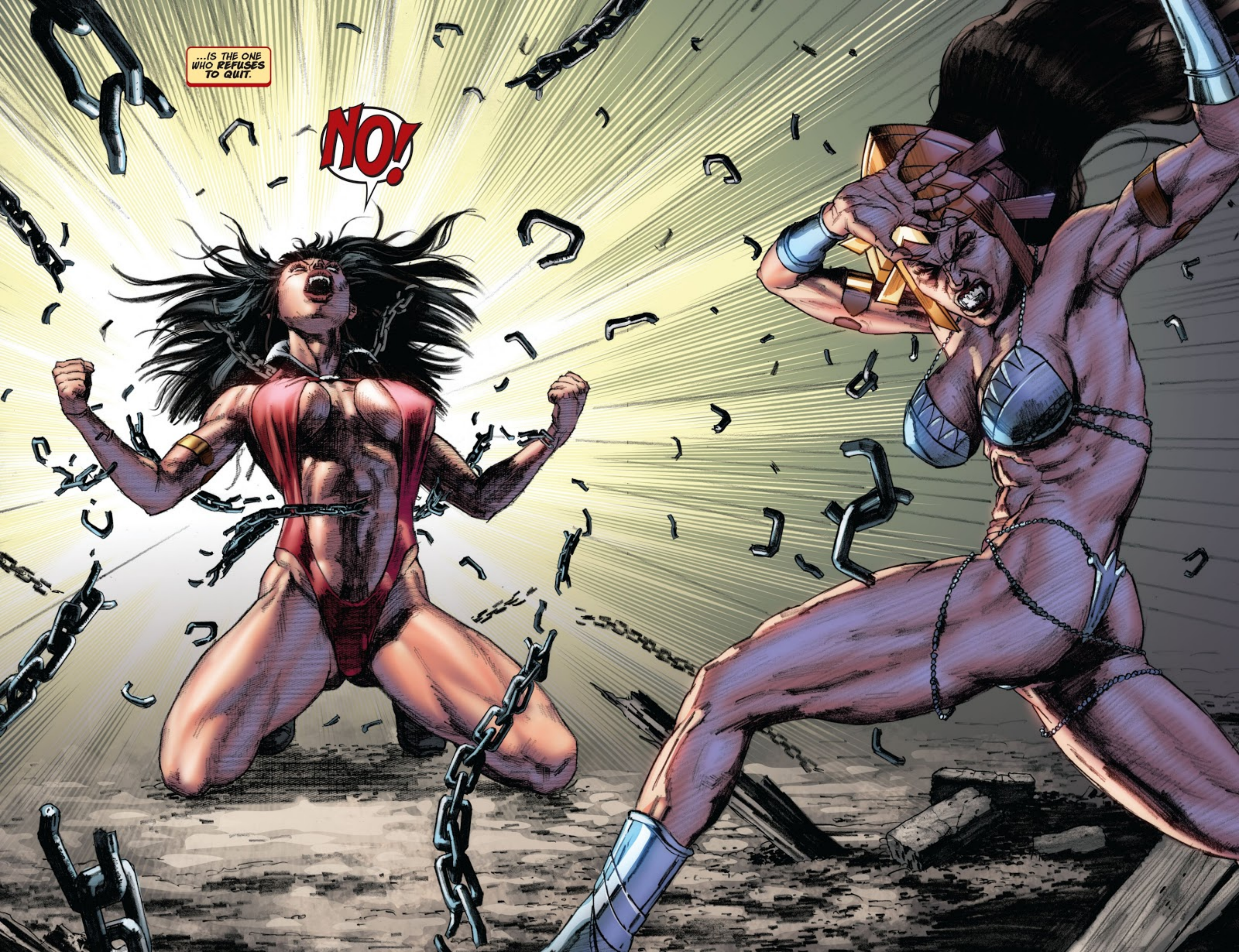
KREEEEK



RRRRRRRRRR

...IS THE ONE
WHO REFUSES
TO QUIT.

No!





MORE SKELETONS.
IS IT MY PERFUME?

SSSSSSSOFIAAAA
SSSS

STAYYY

PLEEEEEASE
STAY WITH
USSSSSSSSSS



IT'S... IT'S SOMETHING ABOUT ME, ISN'T IT?
YOU'RE NOT DOING THE WHOLE FRIENDLY GHOST THING FOR EVERYBODY, RIGHT?

SSSSSSSSSOMETHING
SSSSOMETHING ABOUT SOFIAAAA



WHAT? WHAT IS IT?

SSSENSED YOU BEEEEFORE



BEFORE?
BEFORE WHEN?

TTTTTTTOUCHED OTHERWORLD.
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS
SSSS...*

...FFFFFELT YOU AGAIN,
NOT LONG AGO. CLOSSERRRR. THE
WOLFFF AT THE DOOOORR.**

DOOORRR WAS LEFT OPEN,
SOFFFIAAAA...

*VAMPIRELLA: CROWN OF WORMS.
**VAMPIRELLA #11.



...WAIT,
WHAT?



WHAT DO
YOU MEAN "THE
DOOR WAS
LEFT OPEN?"
AND JESUS,
NOTHING ABOUT
THAT SOUNDS
GOOD.

ISSSSS
NOTTTT.
VERRRRRY
BADDDDD.

AAAAH!

KLATCH



SLSSSSH

WHOOOOP!



NO NO NO
NOT GOOD VERY
BAD WHERE'S
THE DAMN
FLASHLIGHT?!









--WHOA.

WELL, HELLO THERE.

INVISO-GUY'S LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.
AND HERE'S A LOCKED BOX.



KRAK

SPANG



WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO?



YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE MUCH...



...BUT I'M PRETTY SURE VEE WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU...



"...ONCE WE GET THE BAND BACK TOGETHER."

ARE YOU WELL, MY DEAR?

YOU SEEMED TO BE HAVING... DIFFICULTY.

I'M FINE. DESPITE ALL YOUR *HELP*, SCHULD.



YES, WELL, FIGHTING THE MONSTERS IS MORE *YOUR* AREA OF EXPERTISE.

I'M IN THE "MORAL SUPPORT" DEPARTMENT.

WE SHOULD DOUBLE BACK AND FIND SOFIA. YOU SAW HER ON YOUR WAY IN?

INDEED. THIS WAY.



WHEN I LEFT HER, SHE WAS PERFECTLY FINE.



I EXPECT WE'LL FIND HER WITHOUT GREAT DIFFICULTY.



JUST HAVE FAITH, DEAR GIRL.

HAVE FAITH.

TO BE CONTINUED

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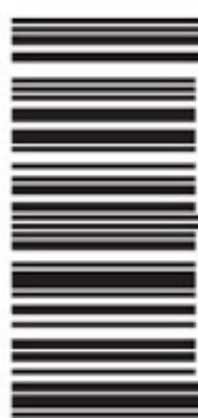
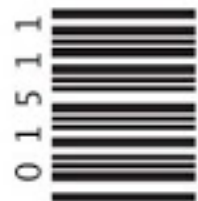
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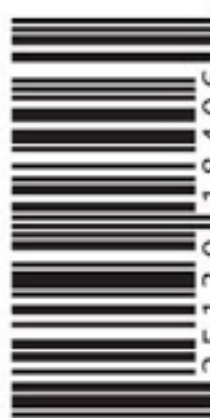

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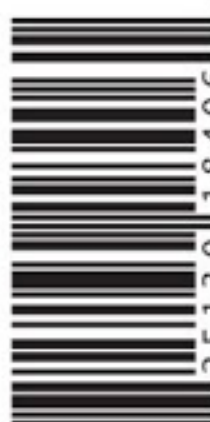
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CRYPTS BENEATH ANI
ARMENIA/TURKEY BORDER
0730 LOCAL TIME.

"THIS PLACE
IS A GHOST."




"CENTURIES OF
GENOCIDE AND ATROCITY
HAVE LEFT BEHIND LITTLE
MORE THAN STILL DUST
AND OLD BONE."



"I IMAGINE HE
FEELS RIGHT AT
HOME HERE."



"ALONE IN THE
DARK WITH THE
DEAD THINGS..."



"...THE GIBBERING
VOICES IN HIS HEAD
THAT SPUR HIM ON..."



"...AND HIS
KNIFE."

"A MONSTER,
DRUNK ON BLOOD
AND DAMNATION."

YOU MIGHT
CONSIDER
A COAT,
MY DEAR.

WE'RE NOT
EXACTLY IN THE
TROPICS.

IT APPEARS
TO HAVE BEEN...
MISPLACED, HERR
SCHULD.

"SHE DOES HER BEST
TO HIDE IT, BUT SHE'S
SEETHING WITH
ANGER."

"I'VE BEEN A PRIEST
FOR **MOST** OF MY
ADULT LIFE, BUT
I CAN'T HELP IT."

"HER SKIN IS PALE AS
MOONLIGHT. HER EYES
BLAZING WITH EMERALD
FIRE. AND HER LIPS..."

"...WELL. BEST
NOT TO MENTION
WHAT THEY MAKE
ME THINK OF."

AHEM.
YOUR
WEAPONS,
YOUR
CLOTHES...

GONE.
THAT SPIRIT,
AL BASTI,
MADE THEM
VANISH.*

LEFT ME
LIKE THIS.

WAIT HERE.

THE DEVIL
ALONE KNOWS WHAT
ELSE IS LURKING IN
THESE RUINS...

*SEE LAST ISSUE.--J.R.



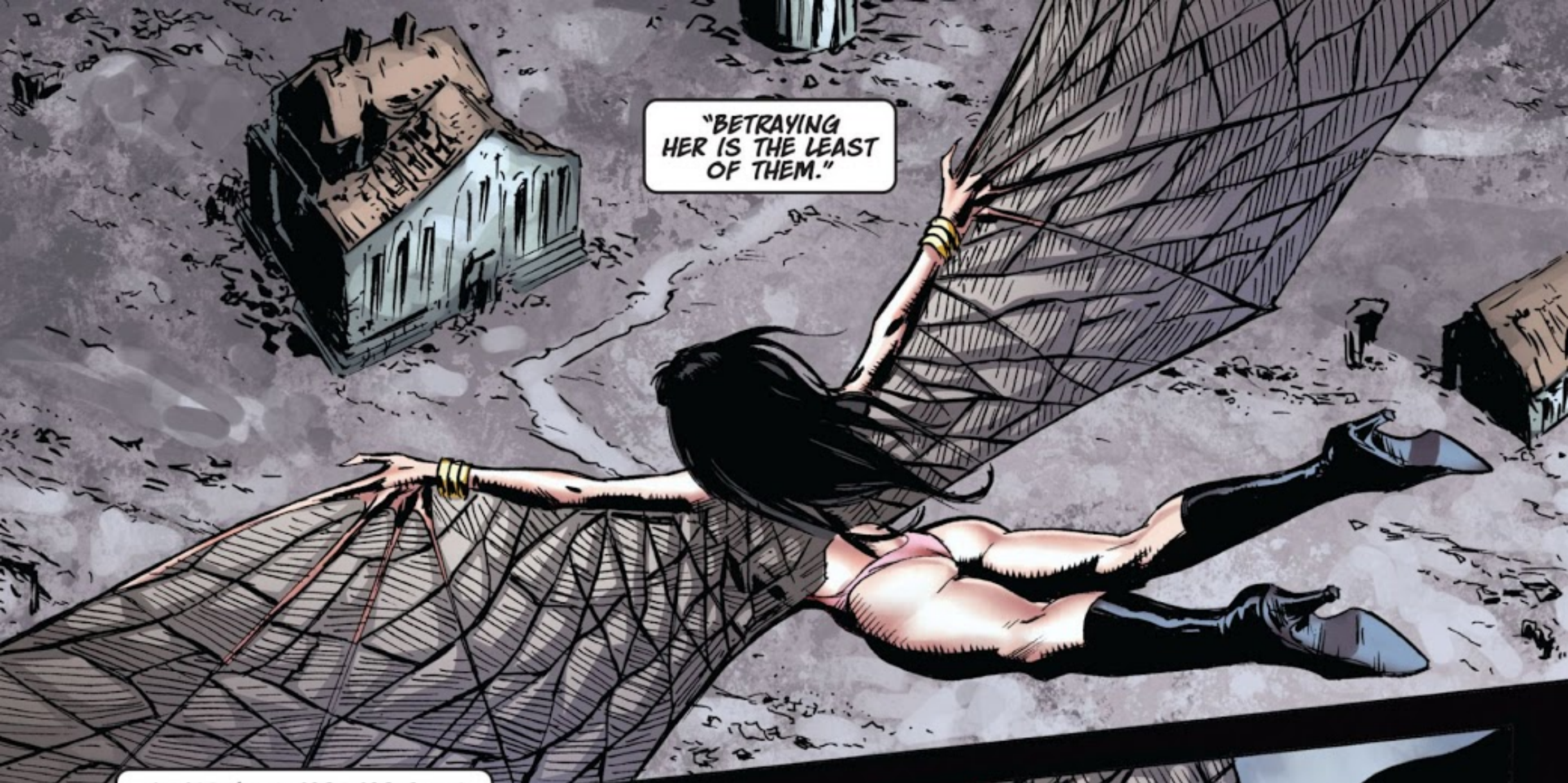
"SHE'S
BEAUTIFUL."

I'M
GOING TO FIND
SOFIA.

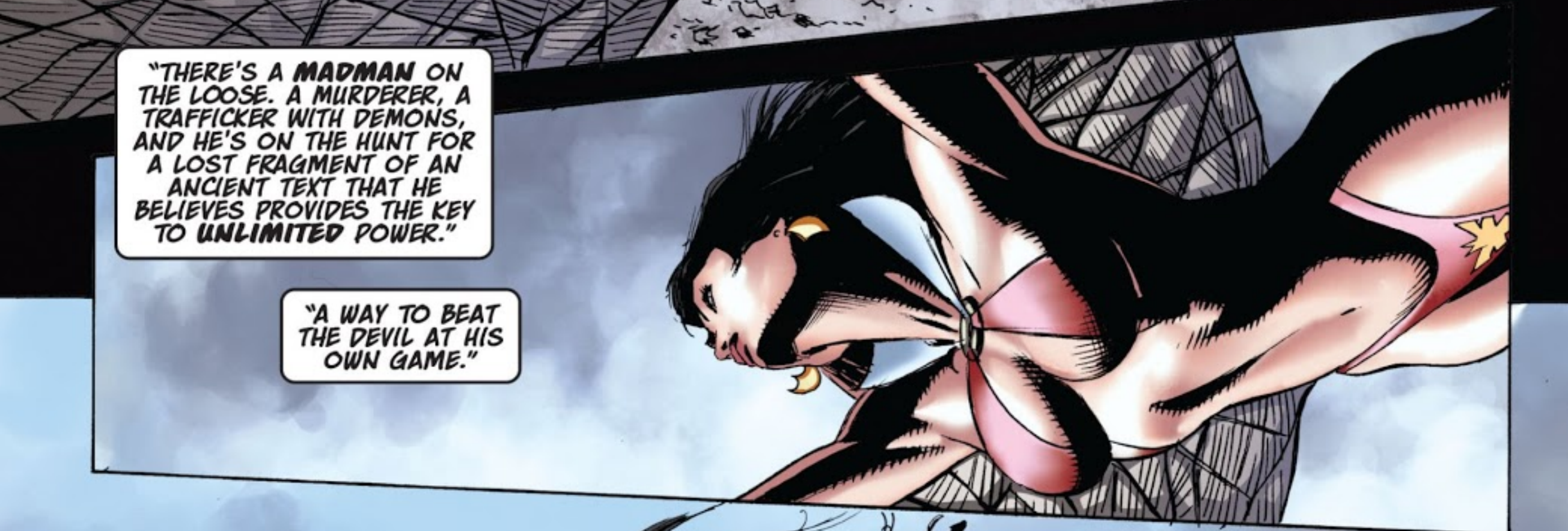
"I HAVE MANY
REGRETS, AND A
HOST OF SINS
TO ATONE FOR."

"AND SOME STAINS
UPON MY SOUL
THAT I WILL NEVER,
EVER BE ABLE TO
WIPE CLEAN."

YES. YOU
WILL. VERY
SOON.


Vampirella is shown from a high angle, flying over a city. She is wearing her signature pink bikini with a yellow star on the hip, black thigh-high boots, and large black bat-like wings. Her long black hair is flowing. In the background, a city with a prominent domed building is visible.

"BETRAYING
HER IS THE LEAST
OF THEM."

A close-up shot of Vampirella's face and upper body. She has a serious expression, looking slightly to the side. Her wings are visible behind her.

"THERE'S A **MADMAN** ON
THE LOOSE. A MURDERER, A
TRAFFICKER WITH DEMONS,
AND HE'S ON THE HUNT FOR
A LOST FRAGMENT OF AN
ANCIENT TEXT THAT HE
BELIEVES PROVIDES THE KEY
TO **UNLIMITED POWER.**"

"A WAY TO BEAT
THE DEVIL AT HIS
OWN GAME."

Vampirella is shown from a low angle, flying towards the viewer. She is holding the edges of her wings, and her hair is blowing in the wind. The city is visible below her.

"THAT'S WHAT
VAMPIRELLA
KNOWS. THAT'S **ALL**
SHE KNOWS, MAY
GOD FORGIVE ME."

"BECAUSE **SHE**
CERTAINLY WON'T."



"I NEVER TOLD HER THE TRUTH."

"I WISH I HAD, BUT THERE'S SIMPLY TOO MUCH AT STAKE FOR THAT."

YOU GUYS WOULDN'T SHUT UP WHEN YOU DRAGGED ME DOWN HERE.

"WOOOOO! WE'RE A BUNCH OF SCARRRRY SPIRITS."



"NEVER TOLD HER THE MURDERER SHE SEEKS IS MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED YEARS OLD."

BUT WHEN I NEED TO FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE, YOU GUYS CLAM UP?

GHOSTS SUCK.



"HIS LIFE EXTENDED BY THE ENCHANTMENTS LOCKED WITHIN THE VAIRO APOCRYPHA."

"HIS HEART DEVOTED ONLY TO RECOVERING THE PIECES OF THAT UNHOLY TEXT, LONG THOUGHT DESTROYED BY THE CHURCH."

"A BISHOP IN A SECRET CHURCH DEVOTED SOLELY TO MURDER AND EVIL."

"A BLOOD-HUNGRY WOLF, LOOSE AMONG THE SHEEP."



ALMOST WHERE?

WHERE YOU'RE MEANT TO BE.

I CAN'T SAY I LIKE THE SOUND OF--

NO TIME. YOU'RE ALMOST THERE. IF YOU MOVE QUICKLY.



TOO LATE.



"BECAUSE TO TELL HER WOULD BE TO ADMIT MY PART IN THE TRAGEDY THAT IS UNFOLDING."

NNNNNGH!

WHAKK



"A PART I REGRET, TO BE SURE. A NECESSARY EVIL."

SNEAKY BASTARD--

"I MUST BE LIKE A SURGEON, TREATING A TERRIBLE DISEASE."



HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN
HHNNNGH!
KRRRAK
THAT, YOU SON OF--



WHUDD



"CERTAINLY, THERE'S A MOMENT OF REMORSE, A PANG AT THE NECESSITY OF AMPUTATING THE RUINED LIMB."

--NO PLEASE WAIT--

"AND THEN, THERE IS ONLY THE KNIFE AND THE SAW AND THE BITTER TRUTH:"



AAAAAHHH!

"THIS PAIN IS
NECESSARY. THIS
SACRIFICE--TERRIFYING
AND TRAGIC THOUGH IT
IS--IS REQUIRED OR
THE BODY WITHERS
AND DIES."

AAAAAAAAAA!

SOFIA?

SOFIA!

"SO I REMIND MYSELF
OF MY DUTY. OF THE
OATH I SWORE."

"I REMIND
MYSELF..."

SKSSSSSSH

"THERE ARE
NO HEROES."

SHRRRIIPPP

"THAT
VAMPIRELLA IS
A CREATURE OF
THE PIT."

"NO MATTER
HOW LOVELY
SHE IS, YOU
CAN'T DENY IT."

"THE COLD FEELING
SHIVERING THROUGH
YOUR GUT."


"THE TINGLING THRILL
OF ATAVISTIC TERROR,
LIKE THE FOOTFALLS OF
THE FLY UPON THE COLD,
UNSEEING EYE OF A
CORPSE."

"SHE IS A BEAST.
HER NOBILITY IS
MERE SIMULATION,
THE ROTE ACTIONS OF
A SOULLESS THING.
NOTHING MORE."


"I REMIND
MYSELF."



"I KEEP REMINDING MYSELF."



"AND I STRUGGLE TO REMEMBER THAT WHAT I DO IS AN ACT OF FAITH AND DEVOTION."



"WHAT IS TO COME IS GOD'S WILL."

COME ON, SOFIA. I KNOW YOU'RE NEAR.



"AND I AM BUT HIS INSTRUMENT."

SNFF
SNFF

AIR CURRENTS FROM BENEATH THE ALTAR...



"AND BY USING VAMPIRELLA AS A TOOL TO SERVE THESE ENDS, IS SHE NOT THEN A PART OF GOD'S PLAN?"

"PERHAPS BY PLACING HER IN SERVICE TO THE DIVINE, SHE CAN BE REDEEMED, AND KNOW PEACE."



LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'RE HIDING.

RRRUMMMBLE

"ALL A LIE, OF
COURSE. I STRUGGLE
WITH MY FAITH. I
ALWAYS HAVE."

"AT THE LAST, I CAN'T
FIND IT IN ME TO
PROLONG THE LIE."

"I HAVE GAZED INTO
THE ABYSS SO MANY
TIMES, AND ONLY
SEEN THE DEVIL
LOOKING BACK. I'VE
NOT YET SEEN THE
GRACE OF GOD."

"FOR EVERY MOMENT
OF COMPASSION AND
KINDNESS I'VE
WITNESSED, FOR EVERY
SELFLESS GESTURE..."

"...I'VE SEEN A HUNDRED
ACTS OF SAVAGE
CRUELTY, UNTIL MY
BELIEF IS A TATTERED,
BROKEN THING."

So why keep
doing it, Herr
Schuld?

Hm?

I know.

Admit it.

NNNGGGAH!

Say it.

Fine.

Then I'll
say it.

NO.

You like it.

SHUT UP
SHUT UP.

You like the murder.
The screaming.
The Blood. And Oh,
I miss the blood.

Just like old times,
eh Schuld?

Ha ha ha ha!
Haaaaaa!



So stop fighting it.

You want it.

I want it.

NNNNN.

Just relax and we can be on our way. Together.

NO. YOU'LL GET YOUR CHANCE SOON ENOUGH.

BUT ONLY WHEN EVERYTHING HAS BEEN MADE READY. I'VE FOUND YOU THE PERFECT HOME.

Spoilsport.



But have it your way, Man of God. I've been patient a long time.

I can wait a little longer.

"I WISH I'D
BEEN A BETTER
CHESS PLAYER."

"TOO MANY
VARIABLES, TOO
MANY POSSIBILITIES."

"I NEVER COULD QUITE
WRAP MY HEAD
AROUND THE GAME."

AAAAAH!

SSSHRIIP

NO NO NO
NNNNNNNN
NAAAAA!

"MY FATHER WAS A
MASTER OF THE GAME.
HE LOVED THE DANCE OF
IT ALL, LIKE THERE WAS
MUSIC ONLY HE COULD
HEAR."

"WHEN ALL THE PIECES
WERE IN MOTION, HE
SAID, THE GAME TAKES
ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN."

I SAW YOU DANCE
THROUGH A HAIL
OF BULLETS. SO
THERE'S NO WAY
I BLINDSIDED
YOU.

I'M NOT AN
IDIOT. YOU'RE
JUST TOYING
WITH ME.

WELL,
I'VE GOT A TOY
OF MY OWN,
UGLY...

SO IF
YOU WANT THE
APOCRYPHA, WE'RE
GONNA PLAY BY
SOME NEW
RULES.

CHING

"THAT TERRIFIED
ME, AS A CHILD."

"INVESTING ONE'S
INTELLECT IN PLASTIC
PIECES AND A WOODEN
BOARD SOMEHOW
GRANTED IT A KIND
OF LIFE."

"IT SEEMED...
UNHOLY."

"BUT HE WAS
RIGHT. HE WAS
ALWAYS RIGHT."

"AND THAT WAS THE
LEAST TERRIFYING
TRUTH HE IMPARTED
BEFORE HE DIED."

AAAAAAHHH!

SHUNKK

PLEASE.

NOT DOWN
HERE. NOT LIKE
THIS. I DON'T
WANT TO DIE
IN THE DARK.

"SO THE PIECES
CONTINUE TO
DANCE..."

"...THEIR MOVES
FORETOLD BEFORE I
EVEN PLACED THEM
ON THE BOARD."

GET
AWAY FROM
HER.

OH GOD, VEE,
IT HURTS...

"I WONDER IF
FATHER WOULD BE
PROUD OR SAD?"

"HE ALWAYS SAID I
HAD NO RESPECT FOR
OUR TRADITIONS."

"THAT I WAS NOT WORTHY
OF THE FAMILY NAME."

"HE CURSED
ME FOR A FOOL
WHEN I JOINED
THE PRIESTHOOD."

THERE'S A
GREAT DEAL OF
BLOOD ON YOUR
HANDS, MURDERER.
A PLANELOAD OF
INNOCENTS. THE
BLOOD OF MY
FRIEND.

VEE!
WE'VE GOT TO
GET OUT OF
HERE--

VEE?

BAD LUCK
FOR YOU. I'VE
GOT A FONDNESS
FOR BLOOD.

"AH, FATHER..."



"...IF YOU COULD
SEE JUST HOW MUCH
I HAVE LIVED UP TO
THE FAMILY NAME."

ENOUGH.

YOUR
POWERS WERE
BORROWED
OR **STOLEN.**



WAP

BARGAINED
FOR WITH
THE FILTH
OF HELL.

PAID
FOR WITH BITS
OF YOUR SOUL
AND FLESH.

BUT IN
THE END...

...YOU'RE JUST
A **HUMAN.**



"BUT FATHER IS LONG PAST SEEING, AND I DOUBT YOU'LL EVER SEE THIS, EITHER, VAMPIRELLA."



NNNF

"BECAUSE THE END GAME IS STARTING."



--YOU?



ME.

YOU'VE DONE WELL, CHILD.

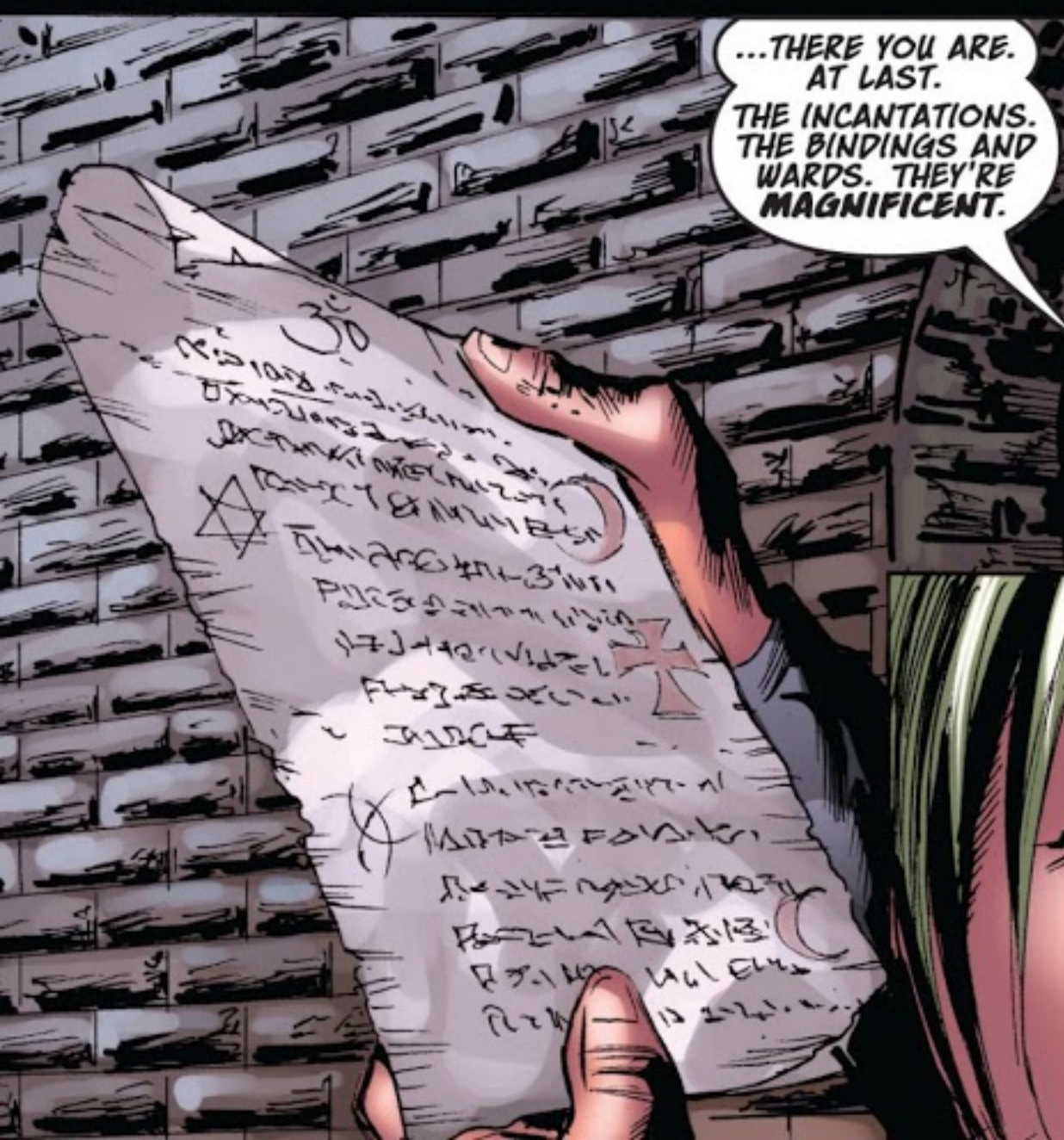
PLAYED YOUR PART BEAUTIFULLY.

MY PART? WHAT, FALL IN A DEEP HOLE, GET JABBERED AT BY GHOSTS AND LET A SERIAL KILLER STAB ME A LOT?



THE LORD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS, SOFIA.

WHERE IS IT?



...THERE YOU ARE. AT LAST. THE INCANTATIONS. THE BINDINGS AND WARDS. THEY'RE MAGNIFICENT.



UH, SCHULD, I THINK WE HAVE A BIG PROBLEM...



"YOU TRY TO FIGHT IT, BUT IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE YOU'VE...INDULGED YOURSELF, HASN'T IT, VAMPIRELLA?"



VEE!
NO!

WE'VE GOT TO STOP HER, SCHULD. I'VE NEVER SEEN HER LIKE THIS.

"YOU'VE TRIED TO BATTLE YOUR HUNGER, TO SUPPRESS WHAT YOU TRULY ARE."

"BUT YOUR CONFRONTATION WITH AL BASTI LEFT YOU ANGRY AND OFF BALANCE."



I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE.

"SO IT SEEMS WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT, AFTER ALL."



MY NAME ISN'T REALLY SCHULD.

"SCHULD" IS GERMAN FOR "GUILT." DID YOU KNOW THAT?

WHAT THE F--



"BOTH OF US BORN FROM HELL'S NOT OF OUR MAKING."

HUSH.

WHAKK

--GAAAH!



"WILLING TO COMMIT HORRIBLE ACTS FOR A GREATER GOOD."

I'M TRULY SORRY, CHILD.

BUT YOU WERE TOO PERFECT TO PASS UP. THE EXORCISM IN GERMANY* WAS A FIELD TEST, AND YOU PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS.

*YOU READ VAMPIRELLA #11, RIGHT? --J.R.



CHRIST ALMIGHTY.



"ALL MONSTERS TOGETHER."



FORGIVE ME, SOFIA.

Oh, she's perfect. Just perfect. A strong mind, but with plenty of trapdoors.

Not her first time playing host, is it?

SO PLEASED YOU APPROVE.

Sarcasm will become you. So, just get on with it.

I have a new life to begin...

...and I'm just dying to thank you in person.

TO BE
CONTINUED

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IT'S ALL GONE
WRONG.

FIRST, THERE WAS
THE RICH, COPPERY
FLOOD AS MY FANGS
PIERCED THE OH SO
FRAGILE ARTERY.

THEN THE DIZZYING
RUSH OF VELVETED
SENSATION, LIKE
A DRUG.

IT'S BEEN SO LONG,
I'VE FORGOTTEN
JUST HOW GOOD
THIS CAN FEEL.

AND THEN,
THE VISIONS.

SHARP-EDGED, LIKE
BROKEN GLASS
RAKED ACROSS MY
MIND.

INSISTENT AND
POWERFUL, BATTERING
ASIDE ANY RESISTANCE
AND PARALYZING ME.

THE GLINT OF
A NEEDLE, THE TIP
HEATED UNTIL IT
GLOWS. THE HISS AS
IT MEETS FLESH.

THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING,
SLOWLY COMBINING, OVER
YEARS OF MURDER, INTO A
SINGLE, ANGUISHED HOWL.

THE UNSPEAKABLE
POWER, WIELDED BY
A MONSTER WHO
LONG AGO FORGOT
HOW TO BE HUMAN.

I CAN'T MOVE.
I CAN'T THINK.

THERE'S JUST
THE VISIONS.



CRYPTS BENEATH ANI
ARMENIA/TURKEY BORDER
0740 LOCAL TIME

AND THE KNOWLEDGE
THAT THE FONDEST
MEMORIES OF THE
MAN I JUST KILLED
MIGHT ACTUALLY BE
MURDERING ME.

NNNNNGGGH



(--THUS DO
I BESEECH THEE,
THOU SERVANTS OF
FIRE, OF FOG, OF
NIGHT WINDS.)

(WITH THESE
OFFERINGS OF
FLESH, OF BLOOD,
AND OF WORDS OF
POWER, DO I BID
THEE COME AND
PARLAY.)



(THUS DO
I DEFY THE WORD
OF HE WHO CALLS
HIMSELF GOD, AND
PLEDGE MY BLOOD TO
THOSE WHO DWELL
IN DARK PLACES.)

--TRANSLATED FROM ITALIAN. J.R.

GOD
FORGIVE
ME.

(THUS DO
I PROVIDE THEE
ENTRANCE TO THIS
WORLD, AND INVITE
THEE TO STEP
THROUGH THAT
DOOR.)

(BLOOD FOR
BLOOD. FLESH
FOR FLESH.)

(A VESSEL
FOR THEE,
SCULPTED FROM
HUMAN CLAY.)

(I INVOKE THE
BINDINGS OF VAIRO,
AND THE SECRET
NAMES OF THE NIGHT
BEASTS, AND COMMAND
THEE TO COME
FORWARD.)

(COME
FORWARD.)



I CAN DO
THIS.

I CAN FIGHT
PAST THIS.

BUT MY LIMBS REFUSE
TO COOPERATE, AND
THE TORRENT OF
IMAGES FROM THE
DEAD MAN'S BLOOD
IS UNRELENTING.



IT'S AS IF THE
BASTARD'S
MEMORIES ARE
A BOMB.



DETONATING LIKE LAND
MINES, CASTING OFF
IMAGES OF TORTURE AND
DEATH LIKE SHRAPNEL.

PLIP



WHO THE
HELL IS THIS
MAN?

PLIP

PLIP

PLIP
PLOOP

PLIP



THE SOUNDS HE'S MAKING ARE JUST HIS MOVEMENTS FORCING AIR OUT OF HIS LUNGS.





IS THIS ANOTHER OF THE POWERS GRANTED TO HIM BY THE GIACOMINI APOCRYPHA?

PAHHHHH

LIKE THE ONES HE USED TO KILL A PASSENGER AIRLINER FULL OF PEOPLE?



VVAAA

WHAT IS IT THAT'S KEEPING HIM MOVING?



VAAMPRLAAAA

ALL RIGHT, YOU UGLY BASTARD. YOU'VE GOT MY ATTENTION.

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?



--AA!



WHAT I WANT WILL
BE OBVIOUS SOON
ENOUGH. YOU
WON'T LIKE IT.

WHY AM I
HERE? WELL, A
DEAL'S A DEAL.

BUT FIRST
THINGS FIRST.

I FIND IT'S
ALWAYS BEST
TO DO THINGS
PROPERLY,
ISN'T IT?

WHO AM I?
WHAT'S IN A
NAME?



I WAS A CHILD, BORN
TO TRUE BELIEVERS.
RULERS IN A COUNCIL
OF...LIKE-MINDED
INDIVIDUALS.



UNTIL OTHERS--MEN
WHO LACKED THEIR
VISION--DECLARED
THEM HERETICS.



HOLY MOTHER CHURCH
TRIED TO DESTROY MY
PARENTS' TEACHINGS,
BUT I HAD THE PRESENCE
OF MIND TO ESCAPE,
RESCUING WHAT I COULD.

LEARNING THEIR
SECRETS.

LEARNING THE SECRET
PATHWAYS BETWEEN
HEAVEN AND HELL,
THROUGH RITUAL AND
SACRIFICE.

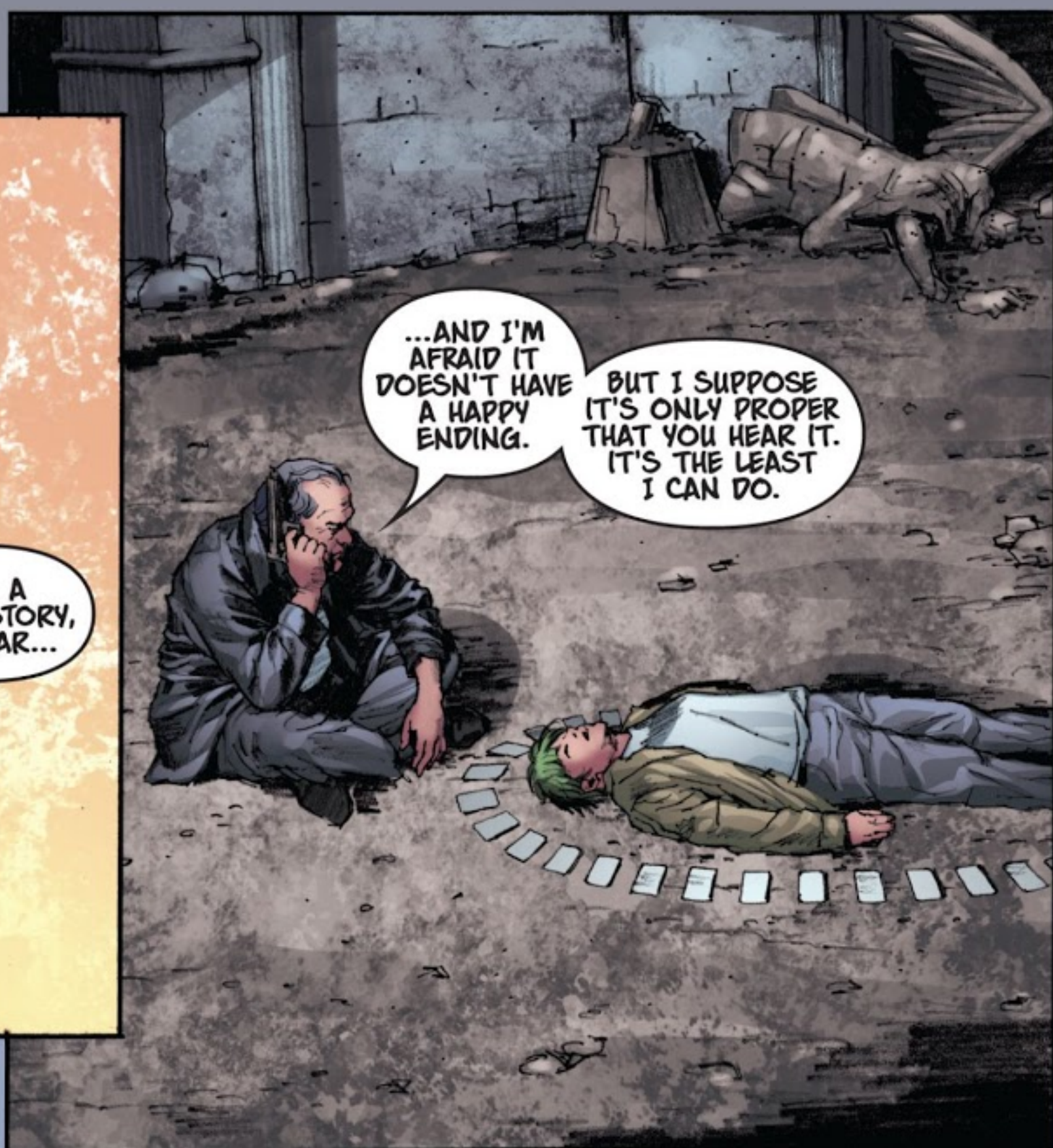
TRAFFICKING
IN POWERS
THAT HAVE
KEPT ME
ALIVE.

SO CESTUS DEI--
NNNGH--KILLED
YOUR FAMILY.

SIX HUNDRED
YEARS AGO.

SO WHY
MURDER THE
PASSENGERS ON THE
PLANE? WHY LURE
ME HERE?

THEREIN LIES A TALE,
CHILD OF HELL.
THEREIN LIES A TALE.

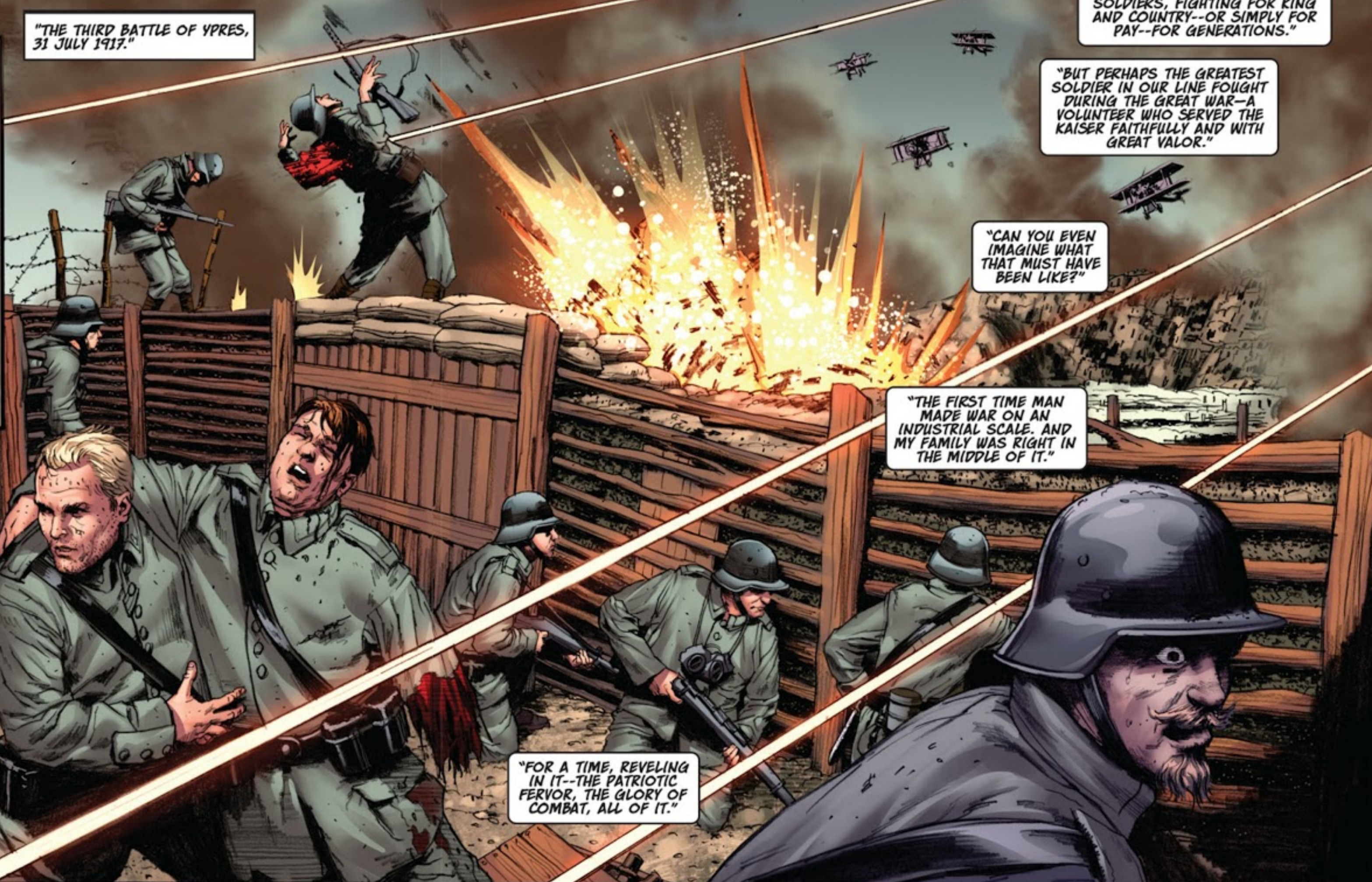




LIKE MOST TRAGEDIES, IT INVOLVES FAMILY.

MY FAMILY, AND OUR SHAME.

"THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES, 31 JULY 1917."



"MY ANCESTORS HAVE ALL BEEN SOLDIERS, FIGHTING FOR KING AND COUNTRY--OR SIMPLY FOR PAY--FOR GENERATIONS."

"BUT PERHAPS THE GREATEST SOLDIER IN OUR LINE FOUGHT DURING THE GREAT WAR--A VOLUNTEER WHO SERVED THE KAISER FAITHFULLY AND WITH GREAT VALOR."

"CAN YOU EVEN IMAGINE WHAT THAT MUST HAVE BEEN LIKE?"

"THE FIRST TIME MAN MADE WAR ON AN INDUSTRIAL SCALE. AND MY FAMILY WAS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT."

"FOR A TIME, REVELING IN IT--THE PATRIOTIC FERVOR, THE GLORY OF COMBAT, ALL OF IT."

"AFTER A BRITISH COUNTEROFFENSIVE NEAR YPRES, THAT ALL CHANGED."

"THERE WAS NO GLORY IN IT. JUST RANDOM DEATH THAT COULD STRIKE AT ANY TIME."

"A HELL OF A WAY FOR A YOUNG SOLDIER TO CONFRONT HIS OWN MORTALITY."

"HE TRIED TO DROWN HIS MEMORIES IN DENS OF SIN ACROSS EUROPE, INDULGING EVERY CONCEIVABLE VICE."

"TO NO AVAIL."

"THAT ALL HE WAS COULD BE SWEEPED AWAY IN AN INSTANT BY AN ERRANT BULLET WAS MORE THAN HE COULD BEAR."

"SO HE BEGAN SEARCHING FOR AN ALTERNATIVE."



WHY DID I KILL THE
"INNOCENTS" ON THE
PLANE? TO HONOR
AN...AGREEMENT.

AND REALLY,
WHY NOT
KILL THEM?

THEY WERE
INSECTS.

THE PEOPLE
YOU KILLED
WERE

NOT

INSECTS.

OH, COME
NOW.

NNGH!

TO THE LIKES
OF YOU--OR
THIS SHELL I
WEAR-- THEY'RE
LITTLE BETTER
THAN CATTLE.

SHELL?

WHOOPS.

FIGURING OUT
MY LITTLE
TRICK, ARE YOU?

DARK
MOTHER.

NO. BUT I'VE
MET HER, OF
COURSE.

YOU'VE GOT
HER EYES.

I SHOULD
THANK YOU
FOR KILLING
THIS LITTLE
FACELESS
BASTARD.

HE'D BARTERED
HIS SOUL OFF
TO ME YEARS
AGO, AND
ONCE IT
VACATED HIS
BODY, WELL...

...WHY LET SUCH
EXCELLENT REAL
ESTATE GO TO
WASTE?

ALL OF HELL IS
RESTLESS SINCE
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS
ALMOST CLAWED
ITS WAY THROUGH
INTO THIS WORLD.*

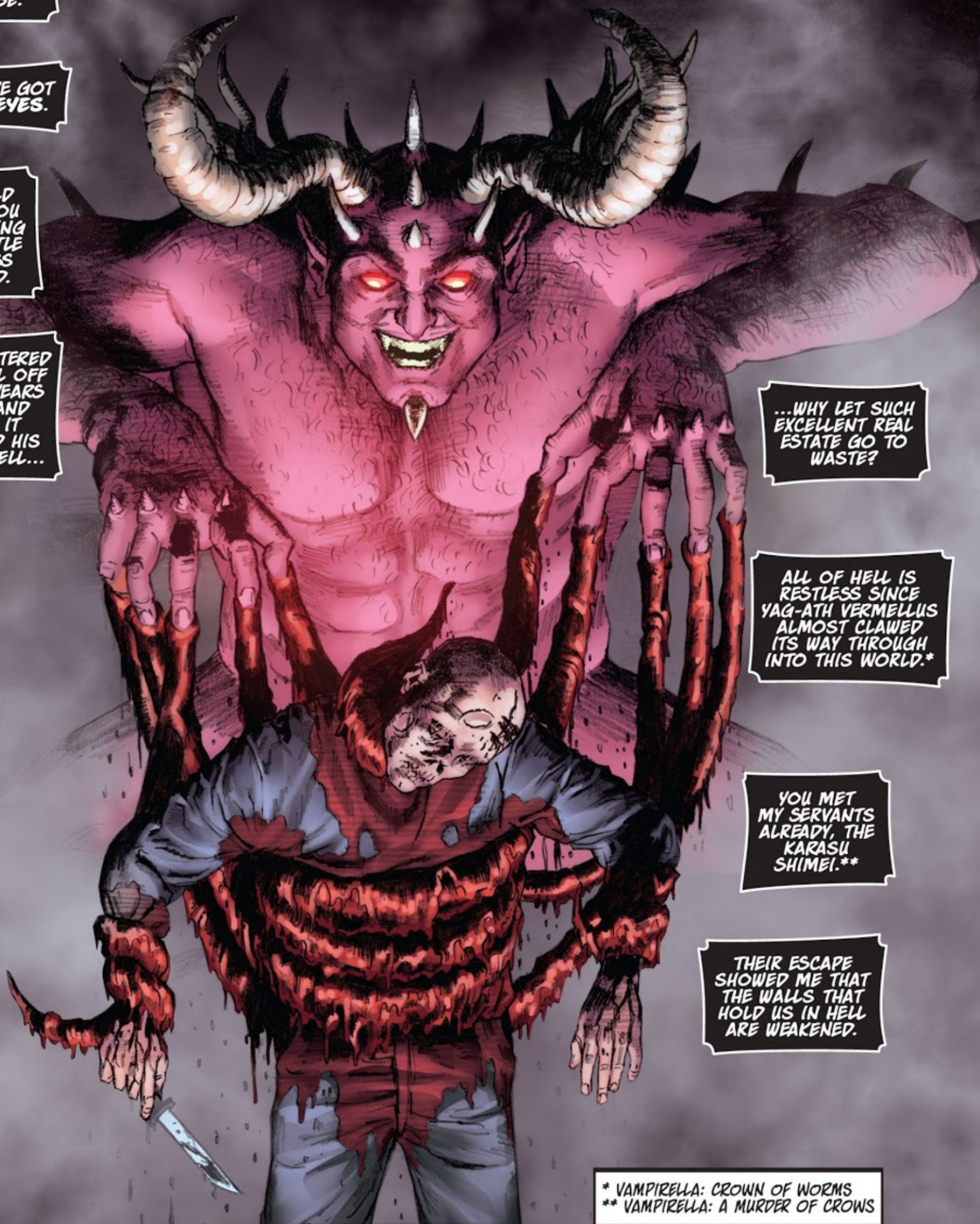
YOU MET
MY SERVANTS
ALREADY, THE
KARASU
SHIMEI.**

THEIR ESCAPE
SHOWED ME THAT
THE WALLS THAT
HOLD US IN HELL
ARE WEAKENED.

* VAMPIRELLA: CROWN OF WORMS
** VAMPIRELLA: A MURDER OF CROWS

SO IT'S TIME
TO STAKE
MY CLAIM.

GET IN ON
THE GROUND
FLOOR, SO
TO SPEAK.





"MY ANCESTOR
HAD FOUND HIS
ALTERNATIVE."

"GAMBLING
HIS SOUL IN A
HIGH-STAKES
CARD GAME."



"A GAME WITH
SATAN HIMSELF,
ACCORDING TO
FAMILY LEGEND."

"HE HOPED TO WIN
IMMORTALITY."



"THE DEVIL CHEATED
HIM, OF COURSE. HE
GRANTED ETERNAL LIFE,
BUT IN A ROTTING SHELL
OF HUMAN MEAT."

"BUT MY KINSMAN
WAS NO FOOL. HE
BROUGHT MOST OF
HIS SOUL TO THE
TABLE..."



"...BUT HE'D LEFT
A LITTLE PIECE OF
HIMSELF IN THESE
CARDS."





BUT HE
WAS A BASTARD.
A MONSTER.

TORTURE, RAPE,
AND MURDER WERE
SPORT FOR HIM. HE
PARTICULARLY LIKED
ABUSING YOUNG GIRLS,
UNTIL HE WAS FINALLY
DESTROYED IN THE
NINETIES.

ALL EXCEPT
THIS LAST
LITTLE BIT.

'N YOU
WAN' TO BRING
TH' BASSARD
BACK? WHY?



I CONSORTED
WITH A DEMON.

I STOLE
FRAGMENTS OF
THE APOCRYPHA FROM
CESTUS DEI AND SEEDED
THEM AROUND THE GLOBE,
KNOWING IT WOULD
LURE SOMEONE FROM
IL CONSIGLIO
DEI VERMI.

I ENCOURAGED
THE CARNAGE ON THE
PLANE AND MADE SURE
YOU WERE DIVERTED
FROM GERMANY.

AND I MADE
SURE THAT OUR
FACELESS FRIEND
HAD DONE WHAT
WAS NECESSARY
TO RESTRAIN
VAMPIRELLA.



...PLEASE.

DON' DO
THIS.



IT'S ALREADY
DONE, CHILD.

HUNGGAH



I DON'T
EXPECT
FORGIVENESS
FOR THIS.

BUT
I'LL DO MY
BEST TO MAKE
IT QUICK.

"A DEAL'S A DEAL," IT SAID. SOME KIND OF RITUAL MUST HAVE SUMMONED IT HERE.

IN EXCHANGE FOR...WHAT? TRAPPING ME?

YOU KNOW, I'D FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH FUN FLESH CAN BE. THE FEEL OF THE BLADE SLICING IT OPEN, THE SPATTER OF BLOOD.

AND I DID SO MISS THE MUSIC OF SCREAMS.

SNIK

BUT RITUALS MEAN RULES. AND THE DEMON MENTIONED THE KARASU SHIMEI, DEMON ASSASSINS I DESTROYED.

YOU'LL BE SINGING YOURSELF BACK TO HELL IN A MINUTE, BEAST...

TEMPORARILY ON THIS PLANE, ANCHORED BY TALISMANS--IN THEIR CASE, KABUKI MASKS--UNTIL THEY COULD COMPLETE A COMPLICATED BINDING.

...I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT.

DESTROY THE TALISMAN BEFORE THE BINDING IS COMPLETE, AND THEY HEAD STRAIGHT BACK TO HELL.

SO WHAT'S ANCHORING YOU HERE, MONSTER?

DEFIANCE IS GOOD.

WILL YOU STILL BE DEFIANT WHEN I'VE STRIPPED AWAY YOUR FLESH, AND MEAT, I WONDER?



OF COURSE. THE RITUAL SCARS ON HIS FACE, ACQUIRED OVER CENTURIES.

I DON'T KNOW.

--?!

SNICK



A LEDGER, WRITTEN IN FLESH AND PAIN, OF EVERY SACRIFICE HE MADE TO ATTAIN POWER FROM HELL.

WILL YOU STILL THINK DEFIANCE IS GOOD WHEN I KICK YOUR ASS BACK TO THE PIT?

BUT THERE'S A CATCH, OF COURSE. THERE ALWAYS IS, WHEN HELL'S INVOLVED.



NO WAIT GET AWAY



SURE, FOR A TIME YOU'LL HAVE POWER. POWER TO MURDER AND ESCAPE UNSEEN FROM A CROWDED PASSENGER JET.



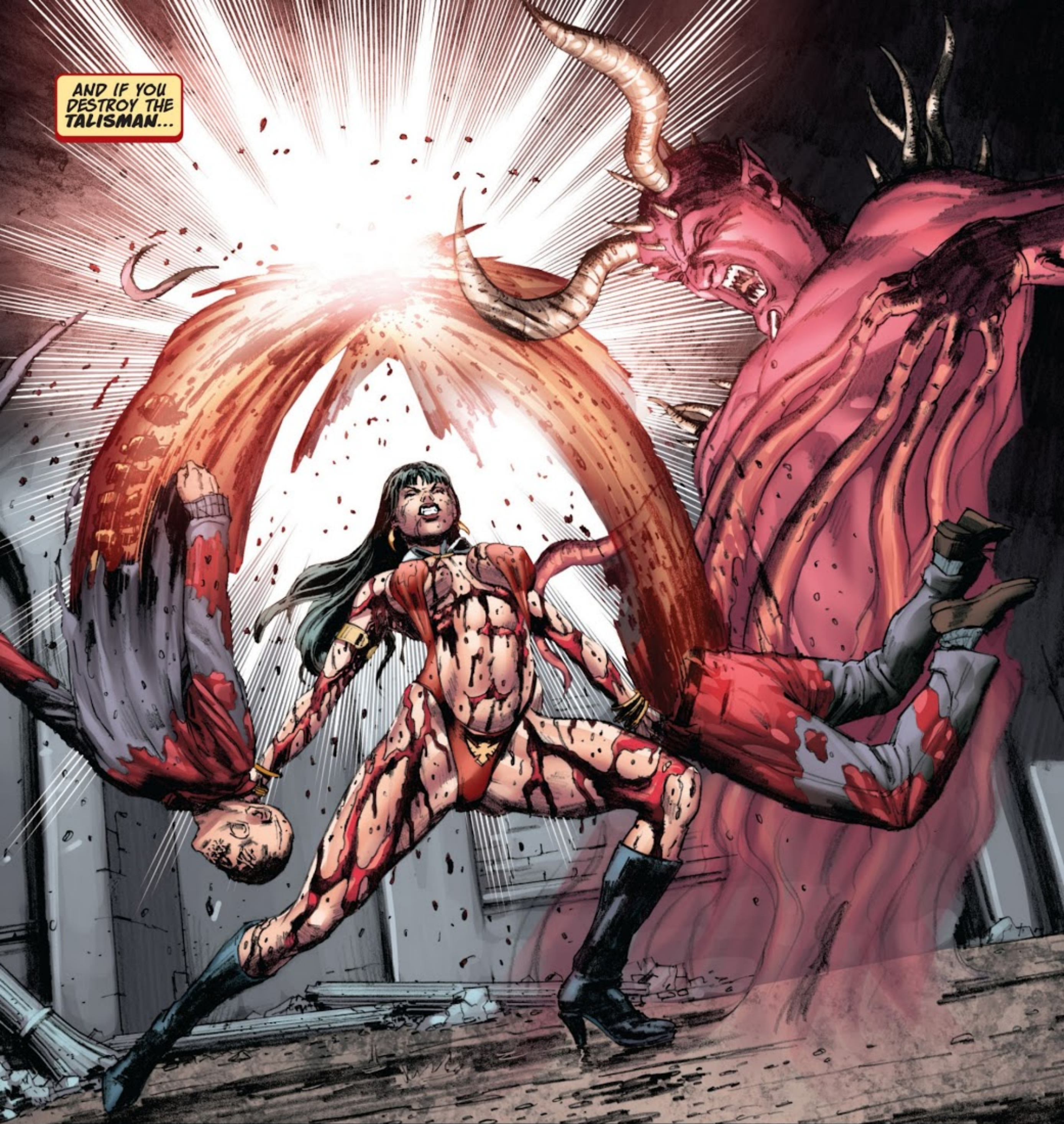
GET AWAY, DAMN YOUR EYES!

POWER TO LIVE FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS.

BUT PART OF THE PRICE OF USING THE APOCRYPHA LIKE HE HAS?

IT CAN TURN A HUMAN BODY INTO AN ANCHORING TALISMAN FOR A DEMON.

AND IF YOU
DESTROY THE
TALISMAN...



DAMN YOU
CURSE YOU I'LL
SEE YOU IN HELL,
YOU UNBELIEVABLE
BIIIIITCH...

--PLEASE
IT HURTS
STOP IT--

SOFIA?



I'M STILL FEELING
THE EFFECTS OF THE
DEMON-TAINTED
BLOOD.

BUT I HEAR SOFIA'S
SOBS. I SMELL SMOKE,
CLOYING, LIKE INCENSE.

YEA,
THOUGH I WALK
THROUGH THE
VALLEY OF THE
SHADOW OF
DEATH...

THAT AND THE SWEET,
METALLIC SCENT OF
GUN OIL.

...I SHALL
F-FEAR NO
EVIL...

NO NO NO
NOOOO.

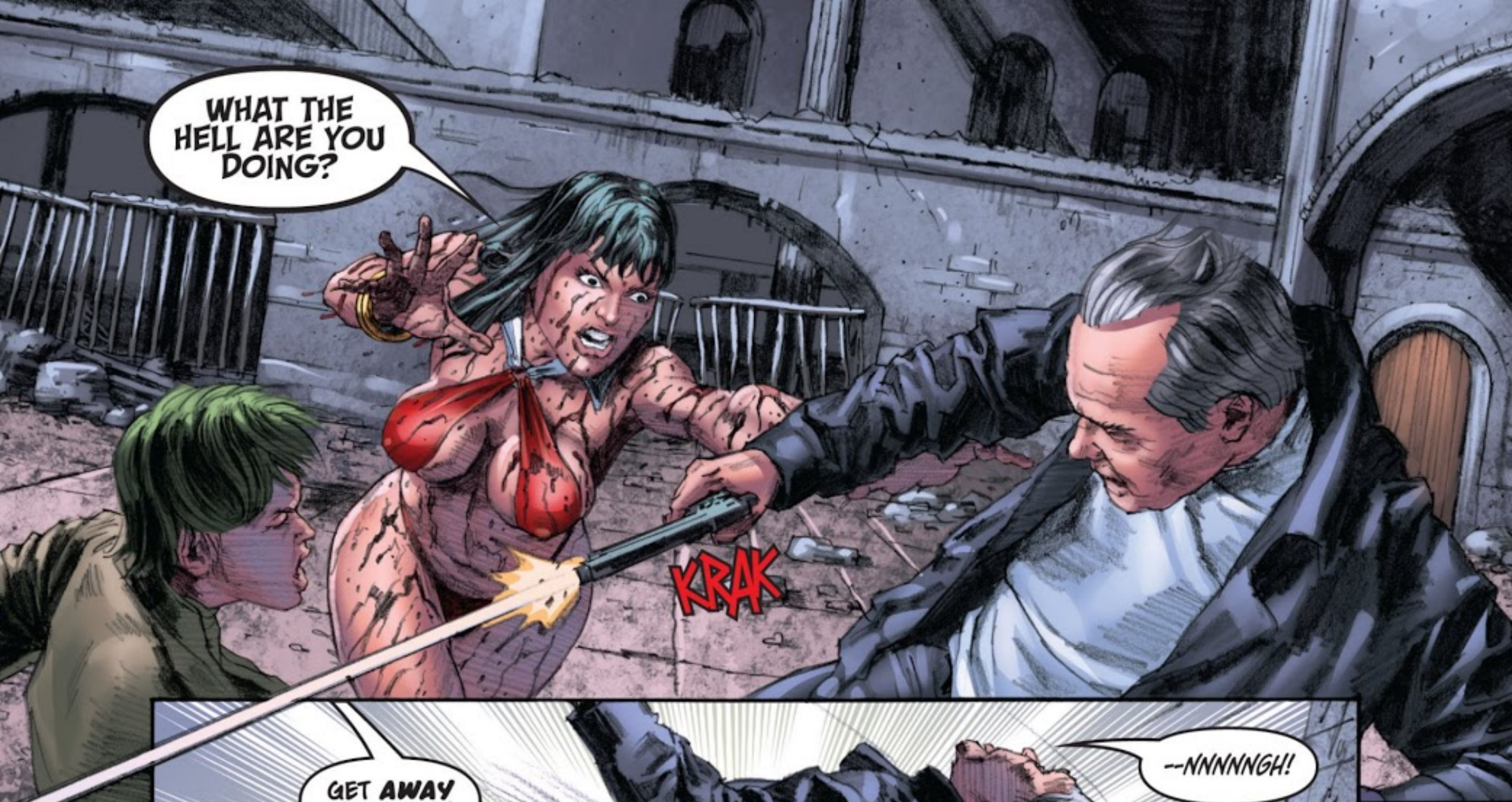
KLK

...I SH-
SHALL FEAR
NO EVIL...

Nnnnnnggggh

W-WAIT!
DON'T SHOOT!

I SHALL
FEAR NO
EVIL BECAUSE
THOU ART
WITH ME...



AND ALL TOO
FAMILIAR.

NOT THE
FORM I WOULD HAVE
CHOSEN FOR MYSELF,
BUT IT'S NOT WITHOUT...
AMUSING
POSSIBILITIES.

NOW STEP
ASIDE.

I NEED
TO DISPOSE OF
THAT EXCREMENT
SMEAR WHO CALLS
HIMSELF MY
DESCENDANT...

...AND THEN I
INTEND TO MAKE
UP FOR AN AWFUL
LOT OF LOST
TIME.

TO BE CONCLUDED

DYNAMITE
17

VAMPIRELLA®



REVAOS
2011
6

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FABIANO

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I'M PRACTICALLY
IMPOSSIBLE TO
KILL.

SURRENDER.

DO IT
NOW, AND COME
QUIETLY.



I DRINK
BLOOD.

I DON'T
WANT TO HURT
YOU.

AH, BUT
I WANT TO
HURT YOU,
VAMPIRELLA.

I CAN MESMERIZE
SOMEONE WITH A
GLANCE.

SO DO
YOUR WORST,
HELLWHORE.

I'M A
MONSTER...

YOU'RE
SURE YOU WANT
TO SEE MY
WORST?



CRYPTS BENEATH ANI
ARMENIA/TURKEY BORDER
0800 LOCAL TIME.



I'VE SEEN
YOUR BEST BEFORE,
VAMPIRELLA. I'M
NOT PARTICULARLY
IMPRESSED.

BUT I ALWAYS
DID ADMIRE YOUR
TASTE IN SIDEKICKS.
THIS **SOFA**
OF YOURS...

...SHE'S
RATHER MY
TYPE.

THIS ISN'T
MY USUAL METHOD
OF... **INHABITING**
SUCH A DELIGHTFUL
LITTLE MORSEL,
OF COURSE.

IT'LL TAKE
SOME GETTING
USED TO,
JAF.

HER BODY
BELONGS TO MY
FRIEND AND ALLY,
SOFA MURRAY.

BUT IT'S
NOT **SOFA** I'M
TALKING TO.

YOU WON'T
HAVE TIME TO GET
COMFORTABLE.



AN OLD ENEMY
HAS TAKEN UP
RESIDENCE.

TSK TSK

THREATS?
THAT IS NO WAY
TO GREET AN OLD
FRIEND, IS IT?



YOU WANT
TO SAVE POOR
LITTLE **SOFA** FROM
NASTY OLD VON
KREIST.



WHICH I'M
PREPARED TO
MAKE MOST
DIFFICULT.

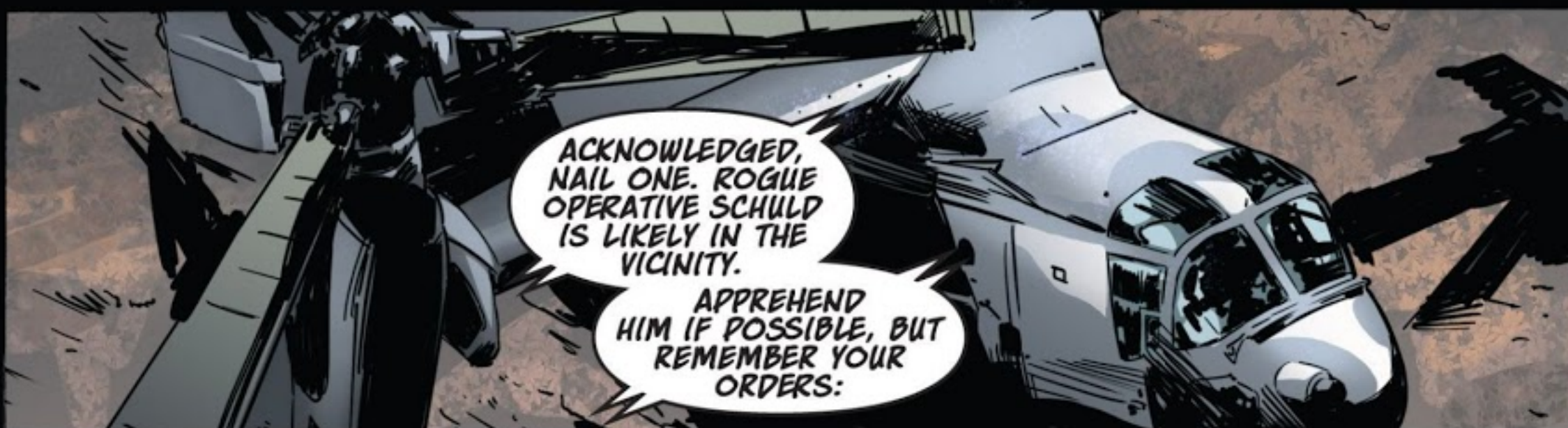
I'M MORE
OF A CARD/MAN,
YOU KNOW, BUT
I THINK THE
PHRASE IS...



...CHECKMATE!

APPROX. 45KM S.E.
OF KARS, TURKEY

NAIL ONE TO
CROWN ACTUAL. TARGET
VEHICLE SIGHTED. IT'S
ONE OF OURS,
CRISWELL.



ACKNOWLEDGED,
NAIL ONE. ROGUE
OPERATIVE SCHULD
IS LIKELY IN THE
VICINITY.

APPREHEND
HIM IF POSSIBLE, BUT
REMEMBER YOUR
ORDERS:



STOP HIM,
AT ANY COST.

GO WITH GOD.
CROWN ACTUAL
OUT.



YOU HEARD
THE MAN.

CHALICE
TEAM IS ON
OVERWATCH...



...NAIL TEAM,
LET'S KICK DOWN
THE DOOR.



SUBTERRANEAN RUINS
BENEATH ANI.

OH, COME
NOW. YOU'RE
SO DOUR!

I'VE BEEN
AWAY FOR SO LONG.
THERE'S NO REASON
THIS CAN'T BE
FUN.

THIS ALL
STARTED IN
GERMANY.



YOU'RE AN ANIMAL THAT SHOULD'VE
BEEN PUT DOWN LONG AGO,
VON KREIST.

YOU'RE HOLDING
MY FRIEND'S BODY
HOSTAGE. I CAN'T
HURT YOU WITHOUT
HURTING HER...

A PARTICULARLY NASTY
EXORCISM SOFIA AND I
HANDLED FOR THE VATICAN.



...UNLESS
I TACKLE THE
PROBLEM AT
THE SOURCE.

ONE WHICH REQUIRED
SOFIA'S PARTICULAR
TALENT.*

*SEE VAMPIRELLA #11...
IF YOU DARE.--J.R.



--WHA?

WE SHARE A BOND, ONE I
DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND.
BUT LIKE VAMPIRES AND
HOUSES...

I'VE BEEN
INVITED IN
BEFORE.

THIS TIME IS
DIFFERENT.



BEFORE, SOFIA
HAD CONSTRUCTED
A LUSH, BEAUTIFUL
MINDSCAPE.

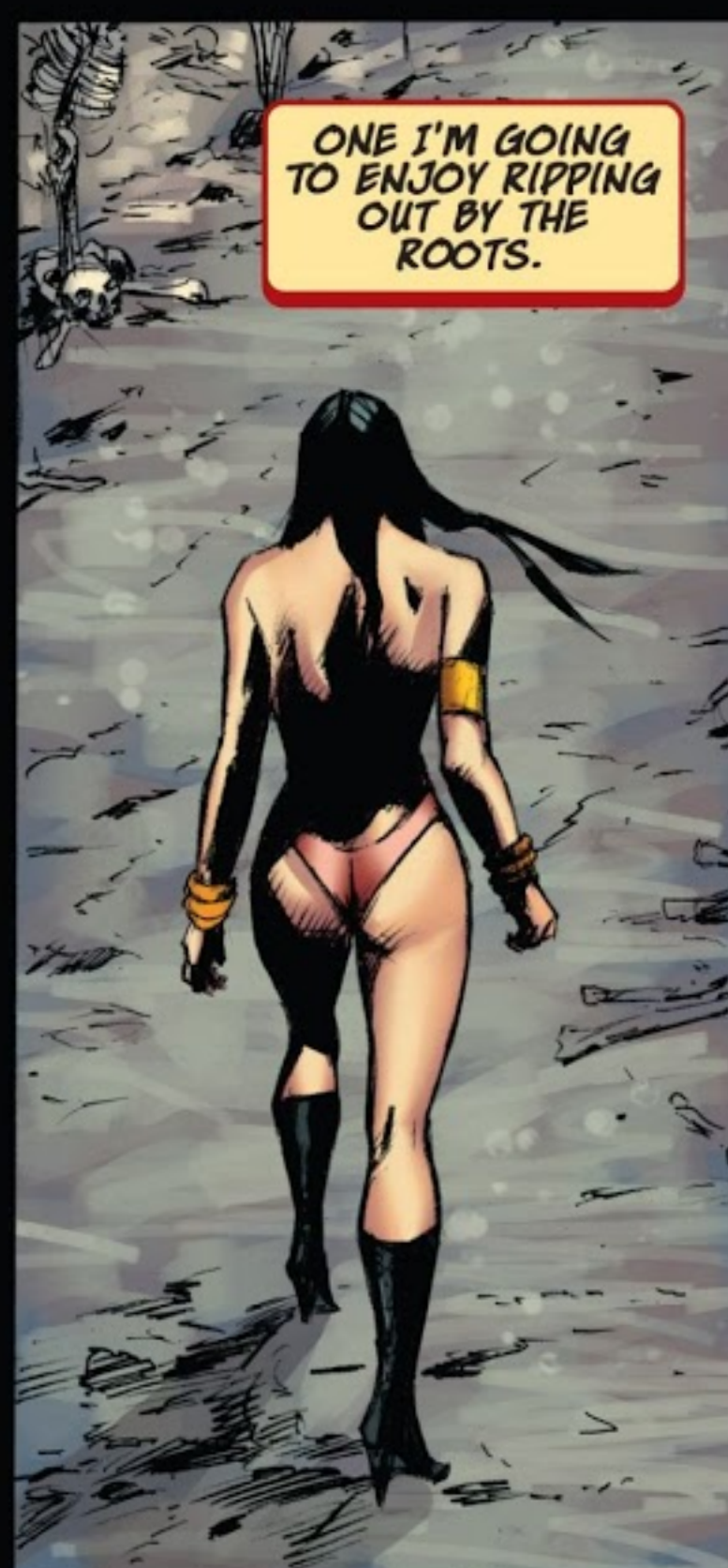
HER MIND WAS
LIKE A SUNLIT
GARDEN.

THAT'S ALL
CHANGED.



VON KREIST
HAS INVADDED THE
GARDEN LIKE AN
EVIL WEED.

ONE I'M GOING
TO ENJOY RIPPING
OUT BY THE
ROOTS.



OUTSKIRTS OF ANI.

CABIN SECURED.
ALL CLEAR.

HITTING THE
COCKPIT.



ALL DEAD.

DÓMINUS
VOBISCUM.



FORM
UP ON ME,
BOYS...



IT'S GOING
TO BE ANOTHER
BAD ONE.

--OH, LORD. NOT
ANOTHER WEREWOLF,
I HOPE. I HATE
WEREWOLVES--



NAIL
ONE TO CROWN
ACTUAL.
TARGET
VEHICLE SECURED,
NO SIGN OF
SCHULD OR HIS
TEAM. PILOTS
ARE DEAD.

...YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU HAVE TO
DO, HAWKING. WE
PLACED TRACKERS ON
SOME OF THEIR
WEAPONS LOAD-OUT,
BUT LOST THEM
IN THE RUINS.

ROGER.
OUT.



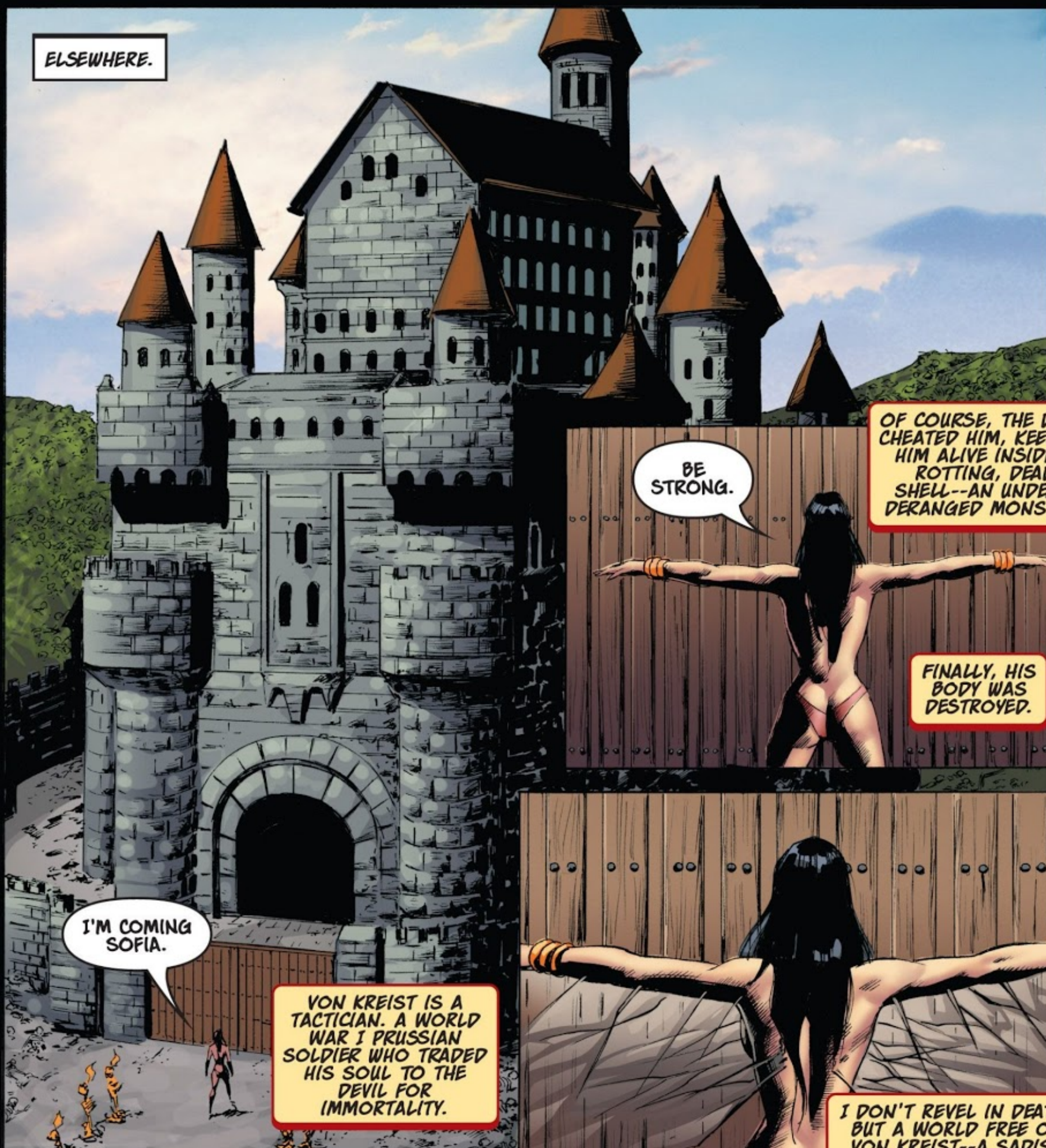
CHALICE, HOLD
THIS SITE.

NAIL,
ON ME.

WE'VE GOT
A RESURRECTION
EVENT TO STOP.



ELSEWHERE.



I'M COMING
SOFIA.

VON KREIST IS A
TACTICIAN. A WORLD
WAR I PRUSSIAN
SOLDIER WHO TRADED
HIS SOUL TO THE
DEVIL FOR
IMMORTALITY.

BE
STRONG.

OF COURSE, THE DEVIL
CHEATED HIM, KEEPING
HIM ALIVE INSIDE A
ROTTING, DEAD
SHELL--AN UNDEAD,
DERANGED MONSTER.

FINALLY, HIS
BODY WAS
DESTROYED.



I DON'T REVEL IN DEATH,
BUT A WORLD FREE OF
VON KREIST--A SADIST
AND MURDERER WITH A
PREFERENCE FOR YOUNG
GIRLS--IS A CONCEPT I'M
COMFORTABLE WITH.

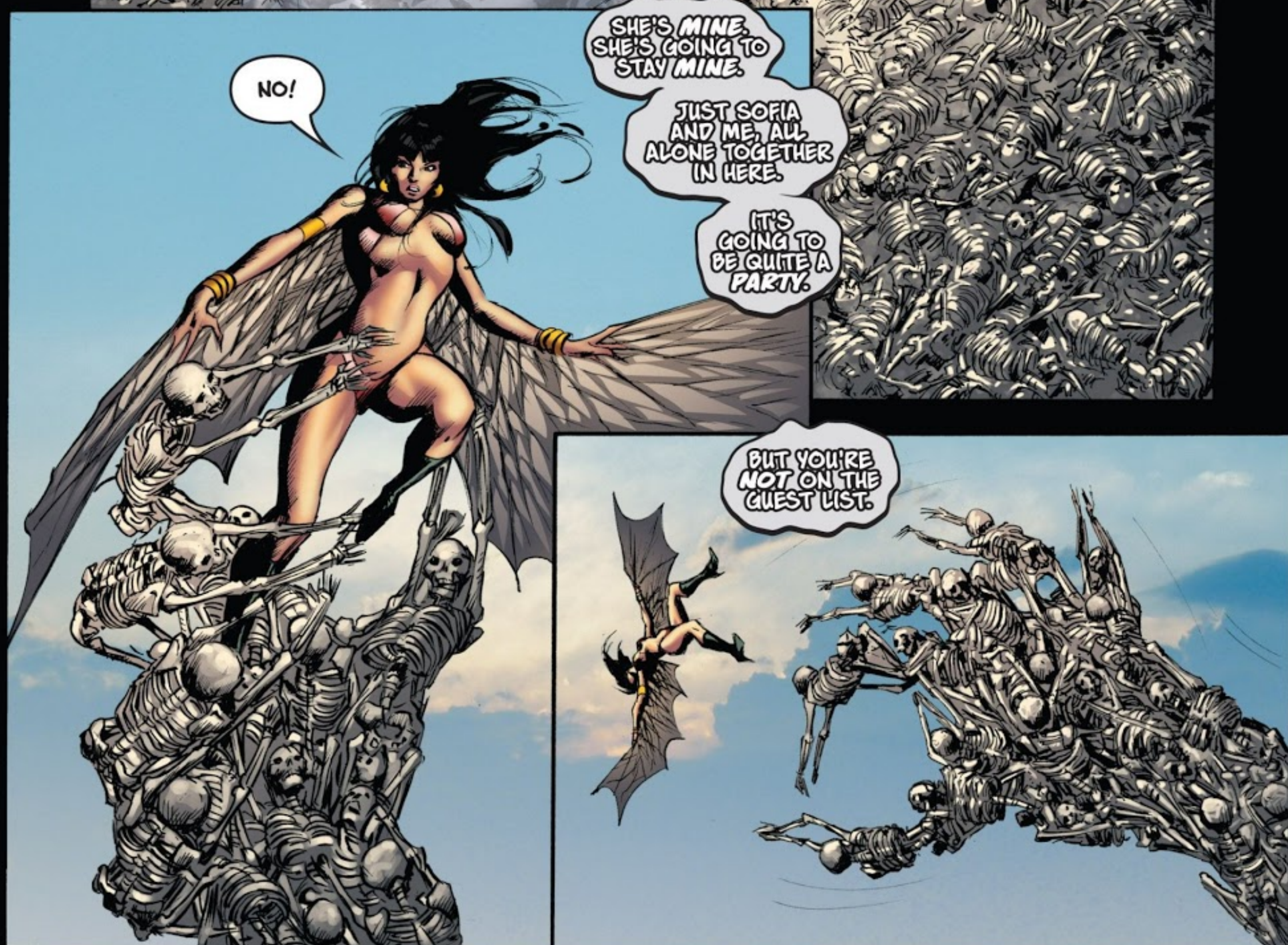


I DON'T KNOW WHY
SCHULD RESURRECTED
YOU, VON KREIST, BUT
IT'S GOING TO BE A
SHORT-LIVED REBIRTH.



YOU
REALLY DON'T
UNDERSTAND,
DO YOU?

YOU
HONESTLY
THINK YOU'RE
GOING TO
WIN.



NO!

SHE'S MINE.
SHE'S GOING TO
STAY MINE.

JUST SOFIA
AND ME, ALL
ALONE TOGETHER
IN HERE.

IT'S
GOING TO
BE QUITE A
PARTY.

BUT YOU'RE
NOT ON THE
GUEST LIST.





OH, NO.

AH. HERE WE ARE.

...NO...

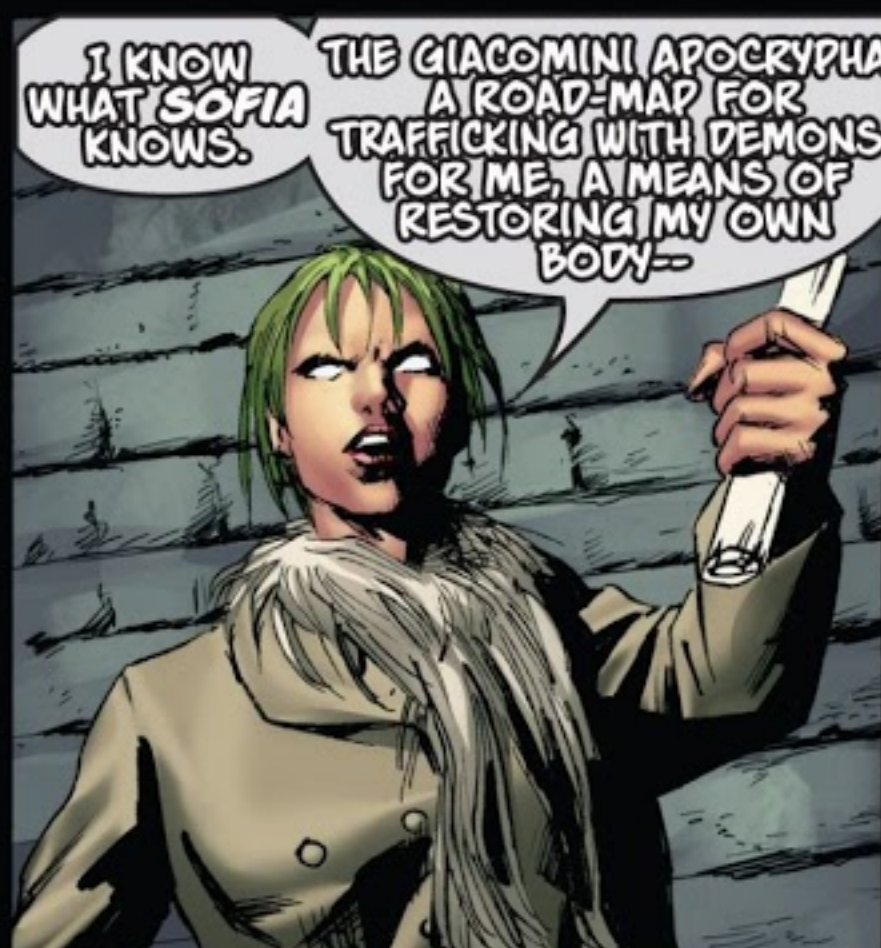


WUNDERBAR.

HE'S BEEN LOCKED AWAY IN A MYSTICAL PRISON FOR YEARS. HE CAN'T KNOW WHAT THE GIACOMINI APOCRYPHA IS, OR WHAT IT CAN DO IN THE WRONG HANDS.



A PIECE OF PAPER? LET ME GUESS: YOU'VE TAKEN UP ORIGAMI.



I KNOW WHAT SOFIA KNOWS.

THE GIACOMINI APOCRYPHA. A ROAD-MAP FOR TRAFFICKING WITH DEMONS. FOR ME, A MEANS OF RESTORING MY OWN BODY--



HOLD STILL, SMILE FOR THE CAMERA...

ad?



TINK



...AND WAIT FOR THE FLASH.

KRAK BANNNNNNNG

THEY'RE CALLED
GROUP ZERO.

THE VATICAN'S COVERT
ACTION UNIT, RUN BY
CESTUS DEI--THE CHURCH'S
MONSTER-HUNTING
INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.

THE SAME GROUP THAT
HAS PROVIDED ME WITH
TRAINING, WEAPONS AND
INTEL SINCE MY RETURN.

IF THEY'RE
HERE, THEY'RE
HERE TO KILL.

YOU!
DROP THE
GUN AND THE
DOCUMENT
AND DO NOT
MOVE!

VAMPIRELLA,
STAND
DOWN!

HOLD YOUR
FIRE! HOLD
YOUR FIRE!

SCHULD
WAS ROGUE,
VAMPIRELLA.

HE MOVED YOU TO RUSSIA
WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION. WE
THINK IT'S A RESURRECTION
SCENARIO.

I'M NOT
TELLING YOU
AGAIN. BACK
OFF.

THEY DON'T KNOW. THEY
DON'T KNOW THAT VON
KREIST IS BACK.

AND IF THEY DID
KNOW, NOTHING
WOULD STOP
THEM.

THEY WON'T
HESITATE.

THEY WON'T
MISS.

THEY'LL GUN SOFIA
DOWN JUST TO GET
THE MONSTER.

KAPOW

I HATE THIS FEELING.

THAT SINGLE, CRYSTAL-CLEAR MOMENT WHERE EVERYTHING STOPS, JUST FOR A SECOND...

NO!

WAIT! YOU DON'T--

...BEFORE ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE.

CONTACT!
CONTACT!

BRAAA
BRAK

BRAK
BRAK
BRAK

BRAK

BRAK

BRAK
BRAK

AND THROUGH IT ALL, I CAN HEAR VON KREIST LAUGHING, MOCKING ME WITH MY FRIEND'S VOICE.

KNOWING THAT, IN STARTING THIS FIREFIGHT...

THAT'S RIGHT, LITTLE MEN. MAKE A FIGHT OF IT.

HA
HAYHA
HA!

KPOW KPOW

SPANG

PANG

TANG

PANG

...I'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO PROTECT HIM.

ENOUGH!

YOU IDIOTS ARE PLAYING INTO HIS HANDS!





CAN'T SEE.

WE CALL IT "LIGHTS OUT." A BLINDING AGENT. SUPER ADHESIVE TO SKIN AND BONE, FAST-HARDENING AND COMPLETELY LIGHT-TIGHT. WON'T KILL YOU, OF COURSE.

CONSIDER THIS A PROFESSIONAL COURTESY.



CAN'T SEE.

...DON'T MAKE ME USE SOMETHING THAT WILL.



CAN'T SEE ANYTHING.



OPENA, BRÜST, ON ME. VON EHRENKROOK, YOU'VE GOT OVERWATCH.

ROGER THAT. LET'S GO BAG A BOOGIEMAN.

THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HER.

THEY'RE GOING TO KILL MY FRIEND.



THEY'RE GOING TO
KILL SOFIA TO GET
THE MONSTER
INSIDE OF HER.

NO.



LEAVING ANOTHER
YOUNG, INNOCENT
GIRL A VICTIM OF VON
KREIST'S MADNESS.

NNNGAH!

SHHHHHRRRIIPP



THAT'S NOT
SOMETHING I
CAN LIVE WITH.



CONTACT SIX!

CONTACT ON MY SIX!

HAVE TO MOVE FAST.



NOT TO WORRY.
SNIPER IS GREEN.

HIT JUST HARD ENOUGH.

I DON'T WANT TO KILL THEM...



...DESPITE THE TEMPTATION.

NNNGH

KABOOOOM



GET IN CLOSE.
PREVENT THE SNIPER FROM TAKING A SHOT.

SOAK UP THE DAMAGE. HEAL LATER. IT'S NOTHING.



CONTACT ENGAGED.

WHUD

DAMN HIM.
HAWKING'S TOO
GOOD. STAYS ON
MISSION. STAYS
ON TARGET.

KNOWS HIS MEN ARE GOOD
ENOUGH TO TIE ME UP
LONG ENOUGH FOR HIM TO
ACHIEVE HIS OBJECTIVE.



BUT HE'S UP
AGAINST
VON KREIST.



NO PLAN SURVIVES
DIRECT CONTACT
WITH THAT BASTARD.

CRAP.

OVERWATCH,
GIVE ME A
LOCATION ON
PRIMARY
TARGET.



NO TARGET.
I SAY AGAIN,
I DO NOT HAVE
EYES ON
TARGET.



PITY.

THE
TARGET HAS EYES
ON YOU.





FALL BACK!
FALL BACK AND
REACQUIRE.
TARGET IS IN
THE WIND.



DAMN IT,
STOP!

THE TARGET IS
POSSESSING THE BODY
OF AN INNOCENT
GIRL. YOU'RE GOING
TO KILL A HUMAN
SHIELD!

AND YOU HAVE
A MAN DOWN,
SOLDIER.



CHRIST
ALMIGHTY.

MASSIVE
HEAD TRAUMA.
OPENA, GET UP
HERE AND GIVE
ME A HAND.



WE HAVE TO
CAPTURE HER, NOT
KILL HER. I DON'T
GIVE A DAMN
ABOUT YOUR
ORDERS.

IF IT'S A
POSSESSION,
THEN WE'RE
REALLY DEALING
WITH A **HOSTAGE**
SITUATION.

THAT RARELY
ENDS WELL FOR THE
HOSTAGE. SHE'S DEAD
ALREADY. YOU **KNOW** IT.



I ALSO KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE UP AGAINST. IF
YOU UNDERESTIMATE
HIM...

I ALSO KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE UP AGAINST. IF
YOU UNDERESTIMATE
HIM...

--SOMETHING
UNDER HIM--

...YOU'RE
ALL GOING
TO DIE.

SPANG

--SON
OF A--

GRENADE!

THAT FROZEN
MOMENT, ACID
ETCHED. ADRENALINE
AND FEAR SLAMS
THROUGH THEM,
BURNING IN MY
NOSTRILS.



THE OILY, METALLIC
SMELL OF THE
GRENADE. THE GREASY
ODOR OF EXPLOSIVES.



GO TO HELL, VON
KREIST. I'M TIRED
OF YOU LEAVING
BODIES AT MY FEET.



AND THEN A
TRAIN SLAMS
INTO ME.



A FAREWELL GIFT
FROM THE ANIMAL
I'M HUNTING. AND
A MESSAGE.



"I'LL SEE YOU
SOON,
VAMPIRELLA."





...WE'RE SENDING
IN MORE TEAMS TO
SEARCH THE AREA
FOR HER...HIM.
IT.

YOU WON'T
FIND HIM.

CITY OF ANI
CESTUS DEI RECOVERY
OPERATION IN PROGRESS
1750 LOCAL TIME

MAYBE NOT
TODAY. BUT I
ALWAYS FIND
MY TARGET.

ANOTHER GIFT. THE
GRENADE BROUGHT DOWN
A SECTION OF TUNNEL. IT
TOOK NEARLY TWO HOURS
TO GET ABOVE GROUND.



ALL THE TIME IN THE
WORLD FOR VON
KREIST TO DISAPPEAR,
WITH THE GIACOMINI
APOCRYPHA.

I'VE HAD
BETTER DAYS,
VAMPIRELLA.

A MAN I
RESPECTED HAS
GONE ROGUE AND
IS NOW IN A COMA,
THANKS TO YOU.

I'VE GOT A MAN DOWN, AND
A MAJOR RESURRECTION EVENT
JUST HAPPENED ON MY WATCH.

MESSY.

MAKE SOFIA
ITY TARGET,
AND SOMEDAY SOON,
THEY'LL LEAVE HER
CORPSE IN AN ALLEY
IN PRAGUE OR
SOMEWHERE.

CRISWELL WANTS
YOU IN FOR DEBRIEF.
I'M TO MAKE SURE
THAT HAPPENS.

AND IF I
REFUSE?

WELL. THAT WOULD
BE A HELL OF A THING.

ANOTHER CASUALTY
OF CESTUS DEI'S
SECRET LITTLE WAR.

I OWE
YOU FOR
PROTECTING
MY MEN.

IF I HAVE
TO, I'LL TELL
CRISWELL YOU
ESCAPED IN THE
GRENADE
BLAST.

BUT IF YOU WANT
TO MAKE SURE SOFIA
IS RECOVERED SAFELY, I'D
THINK YOU'D WANT TO
KEEP AN EYE ON US.

YOUR CALL,
OF COURSE.



A WAR IT FEELS
LIKE WE'RE ALL
LOSING.

...FINE.

LET'S GET
THE HELL OUT
OF HERE.

THE END NEXT:
THRONE OF
SKULLS

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Reynolds
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8

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PROLOGUE

YOU'RE SURE
YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING?

DON'T I
ALWAYS?

TOO TOUGH TO CALL,
GIVEN YOUR HISTORY.
BUT YOU ALWAYS DID
THINK BIG.

THAT'S ONE OF
THE THINGS I'VE
ALWAYS LIKED
ABOUT YOU, VLAD.

STILL, FROM DOWN HERE
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN
LOSING YOUR EDGE. HOW
MANY TIMES HAS A VAN
HELSEING OR VAMPIRELLA
DRIVEN A STAKE THROUGH
YOUR PLANS?

SO TO
SPEAK.

TOO MANY
TIMES.

BUT YOU
KNOW ALL ABOUT
THAT TOO, DON'T
YOU, **BOTIS**?

THAT'S RIGHT.
I KNOW YOUR TRUE
NAME. **BOTIS**, EARL
OF HELL, MASTER
OF THE KARASU
SHIMEI.*

THE DEMON
WHO WAS JUST
TROUTONCED BY
VAMPIRELLA
AT ANI.**

...YOU KNOW
QUITE A LOT,
DON'T YOU?

IT PAYS TO
STAY INFORMED,
DEMON.

I WAS ONCE A
PRINCE. A YEAR
AGO, I ALMOST
WORE THE CROWN
OF WORMS.

I AM VLAD
DRACULA, AND
I WILL RULE THIS
WORLD FROM
A THRONE OF
SKULLS.

AND, SINCE I KNOW
YOUR TRUE NAME, AND
THUS HAVE **POWER** OVER
YOU, YOU'RE GOING TO
DO **YOUR** PART.

IT'S YOUR
FUNERAL.

* VAMPIRELLA: A MURDER OF CROWS TP
** VAMPIRELLA #16--J.R.



...WE'LL SEE,
I SUPPOSE.



LORDS OF
ORDER AND
CHAOS...

I'D FORGOTTEN
HOW GOOD THE
SUN FEELS.



(A LOVELY
DAY, IS IT
NOT?)

(Y-YES
IT I-IS.)



(A PITY
TO WASTE
SUCH A LOVELY
MORNING.)

(BUT
THERE'S SO
MUCH WORK
YET TO BE
DONE...)



(...AND
IDLE HANDS
ARE THE DEVIL'S
WORKSHOP,
YES?)

HA HA
HA HA HA
HAAAA!

END PROLOGUE

--CLEANUP
CREW REPORTING
IN--

--RELIEF
UNIT EN ROUTE
TO ANI--

GOD ALMIGHTY.
DOESN'T FEEL
RIGHT.

HM?

--NEED AT
LEAST ONE MORE
OSPREY--

IT'S BEEN
JUST OVER
A WEEK.

CAN'T GET
USED TO ONE OF
THOSE... THINGS
RUNNING LOOSE
IN HERE.

BETTER
GET USED
TO IT...

EIGHT DAYS
OF SEARCHING, OF
HUNTING FOR CLUES.

INNER SANCTUM
OF THE VESTRY
CESTUS DEI'S
WAR ROOM

...THERE
BE MONSTERS
HERE.

OF CESTUS DEI--THE
VATICAN'S COVERT PARANORMAL
STRIKE FORCE--USING THEIR
NOT-INCONSIDERABLE RESOURCES
TO HUNT FOR A SIGN, ANY SIGN,
OF MY FRIEND:

SOFIA MURRAY, A BRAVE
AND RESOURCEFUL YOUNG
WOMAN WHO STOOD AT
MY SIDE IN THE BATTLE
AGAINST AN ANCIENT
GOD OF HUNGER.

WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL
IN THE DEFEAT OF THE
KARASU SHIMEI--A TRIO
OF HELLBORN ASSASSINS
WHO HAD ESCAPED FROM
THE PIT BENT ON MURDER
AND CARNAGE.

WHO LOOKED
DRACULA HIMSELF
DEAD IN THE EYE
WITHOUT BLINKING.

--MAY HAVE
SLIPPED OVER
THE BORDER--

--REQUEST
FROM NAIL ONE
TO RETURN TO
FIELD--

--ANI TEAM
IS SHOWING
NO TRACES--

--GET ME
SAT UPLINK TO
MOSCOW--

--CRISWELL
NEEDS A SITREP
PIPED TO HIS
WORKSTATION--

SOFIA MURRAY, BETRAYED
BY AN ALLY AND FORCED TO
HOST THE BLACK, TWISTED
SOUL OF A SADISTIC
MURDERER, VON KREIST.

YOU LOOK
RESTLESS.

THE YOUNG
GIRL THAT
CESTUS DEI
TRIED TO KILL.

I'VE BEEN
COOPED UP HERE
FOR A WEEK. I
SHOULD BE OUT
THERE, LOOKING
FOR HER.

I HAVE
NEWS THAT
SHOULD CHEER
YOU UP.

--STATION
PRAGUE MAY
HAVE HAD A
SIGHTING--

--NO FAMILY
LEFT, SEATTLE TEAM
SHOWS NEGATIVE
RESULT OF
SURVEILLANCE--

HIS NAME IS CRISWELL.

A PROTEGE OF MY OLD HANDLER, SCHULD.

A SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR, COORDINATING CESTUS DEI'S OPERATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE.

MEDICAL RANG. HE'S STARTING TO COME OUT OF THE COMA.

WE'LL BE STARTING THE DEBRIEF SOON, BUT YOU HAD EXPRESSED **INTEREST** IN BEING THE FIRST TO SPEAK TO HIM.

I HAD **EXPRESSED** THE IDEA THAT, IF YOU DON'T LET ME SPEAK TO HIM, I'LL PULL THIS PLACE DOWN AROUND YOU.

TO-MAY-TO, TO-MAH-TO, MY DEAR.

DESPITE OUR RECENT **DIFFERENCES**, WE'VE HAD A VALUABLE COLLABORATION IN THE PAST.

I HAVE **FAITH** THAT OUR ALLIANCE CAN CONTINUE.

I CAN'T SAY I LIKE HIM--OR HIS MASTERS--MUCH.

SO, A SHOW OF GOOD FAITH.

WHAT'S THE OLD LINE?

SO LET HIM SWEAT A BIT.

DEEET

ENTER FREELY, ET CETERA?

A LITTLE SUFFERING IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL, AFTER ALL.

SHALL WE?

WE? NO. I'LL TALK TO HIM ALONE.

I'M, AH, NOT SURE THAT'S THE BEST IDEA. GIVEN YOUR HISTORY--

YOU WANT ME TO **TRUST** YOU?

YOU CAN START BY TRUSTING **ME**, CRISWELL. AND BY GETTING THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY.

CRISWELL IS RIGHT
TO WORRY.

THE TUB OF EXCREMENT
IN THE HOSPITAL BED WAS
SUPPOSED TO BE AN ALLY.
A CONTACT WITH CESTUS
DEI WHO PROVIDED INTEL,
ARMAMENTS, RESOURCES.

WHO PROVIDED ME
WITH TARGETS IN
MY WAR AGAINST
THE DARKNESS.

HERR
SCHULD.

IT WAS NEVER THE
MOST COMFORTABLE
OF ALLIANCES, BUT
EVEN I DIDN'T SEE HIS
BETRAYAL COMING.

HELLO,
MY DEAR.

OR SHOULD
I SAY, HERR
VON KREIST?

I WANT HIM DEAD
MORE THAN ANYONE
ELSE IN THE WORLD.

EXCUSE ME...
MISS. THIS
PATIENT IS
RECOVERING FROM
A SEVERE SPINAL
INJURY.

I DON'T CARE
WHAT CRISWELL SAYS,
THE LAST THING HERR
SCHULD NEEDS IS TO
BE ACCOSTED BY THE
INDIVIDUAL WHO PUT
HIM HERE--

DOCTOR.
YOU CAN
GO.



I SHOULD GO.

ALONE AT LAST.



ALONE WITH THIS BROKEN SACK OF MEAT AND BONE.

WAIT.



AND A HATRED I NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE.

FOR WHAT? FOR YOU TO APOLOGIZE? TO JUSTIFY PLACING THE SOUL OF THAT... MONSTER IN THE BODY OF MY FRIEND?

TO MAKE ME PITY YOU? FORGIVE YOU? IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT, SCHULD? ABSOLUTION?

WHAT DO I WANT?



I TRIED TO RID THE WORLD OF THE FILTH THAT STAINS MY FAMILY NAME, AND WAS WILLING TO SACRIFICE YOUR FRIEND TO DO IT.

I FAILED AT A COST THAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS **HIDEOUS**.

I **DESERVE** NO ABSOLUTION, VAMPIRELLA. I DESERVE NOTHING LESS THAN YOUR RETRIBUTION.



GO BACK TO SLEEP, SCHULD.

DEATH IS TOO GOOD FOR YOU, SCHULD.

SOME SAY COMA PATIENTS CAN STILL HEAR WHAT WE SAY. SO HEAR THIS:



DEET
BA-DEET

oooooooooooooooooooo

...THE DARKNESS YOU'RE IN NOW IS BETTER THAN YOU DESERVE.



DAMN.

I DON'T RELISH KILLING, I WANT TO FEEL HIS LIFE EBB BENEATH MY FANGS.

THE INNOCENT LIFE HE'S FOREVER DESTROYED.

THE UNIMAGINABLE HORROR HE'S SET LOOSE.



DAMN.

"KILL HIM."



"YOU DESERVE IT. INDULGE YOURSELF."

"JUST THIS ONCE."

DAMN.



RRRRRRRAAAGH!

KA-RAKK



YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEONE WHO NEEDS TO BLOW OFF SOME STEAM.

MIGHT HAVE JUST THE THING FOR YOU, IF YOU'RE UP FOR IT.

THE LAST TIME WE WERE IN THE FIELD TOGETHER, HAWKING, THINGS DIDN'T END WELL.

THE EVENTS IN ANI WERE AN...UNFORTUNATE CONVERGENCE OF AGENDAS, VAMPIRELLA.

HAWKING AND HIS TEAM TRYING TO SHOOT SOFIA IN THE HEAD IS SOMETHING MORE THAN UNFORTUNATE CRISWELL.

DIFFERENT MISSION OBJECTIVES, THAT'S ALL.

WORK WITH US, AND YOU HAVE A MUCH BETTER CHANCE OF BRINGING SOFIA IN ALIVE.

TO THAT END...

I PROPOSE A NEW MISSION.

SEVERAL REPORTS OF PARANORMAL ACTIVITY. VISITATIONS, SOME KIND OF "GHOST PRIEST," HORRIFYING VISIONS.

ALL LOCALIZED, AND ALL HERE IN ROME.

NOTHING TOO SERIOUS, BUT THE FACT THAT IT'S RIGHT ON OUR DOORSTEP IS SOMETHING WE CAN'T IGNORE.

• EVENT 1: REPORTS OF "GHOSTLY SCREAMS" EMANATING FROM ALLEY, BORGO.
• EVENT 2: 14 EYEWITNESSES REPORT THE FIGURE OF A BEHEADED PRIEST, WANDERING THE STREETS NEAR PASSETTO DI BORGO
• EVENT 3: INCREASE IN RODENT POPULATION REPORTED, INCLUDING "STRANGE BEHAVIOR"
>> LOADING...

SO WHAT DO YOU SAY?

UP FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN?

THE BORGIO,
JUST OUTSIDE VATICAN CITY.
ROME, ITALY.
FOUR HOURS LATER.

CRISWELL IS A
CLEVER BASTARD,
I'LL GIVE HIM
THAT.

I MAKE HIS PEOPLE
NERVOUS, SO
GETTING ME OUT
OF THE VESTRY IS
AN OBVIOUS MOVE.

KEEPING ME UNDER THE GUNS OF
HAWKING AND HIS TEAM-- CODENAMED
"NAIL"--SO THEY CAN EVALUATE ME
FOR AN INEVITABLE CONFRONTATION
IS EQUALLY OBVIOUS.

(AND I HAVE TO HAND IT TO THEM, THEY'RE
GOOD. I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM OR CAUGHT
THEIR SCENT IN HOURS, BUT I KNOW
THEY'RE OUT THERE. WAITING. WATCHING.)

STILL, MY PRIORITIES
HAVEN'T CHANGED.

IF CESTUS DEI CAN'T FIND SOFIA,
I'M SURE THE UNDERWORLD OF
SUPERNATURAL FORCES ON EARTH
CAN PROVIDE ME WITH A LOCATION.

AND HAWKING IS RIGHT:
I DO NEED TO BLOW
OFF THE COBWEBS.

TOO BAD FOR
WHATEVER POOR
CREATURE ENDS
UP IN MY WAY.

NORMANDY
ONE TO NAIL
TEAM, POSSIBLE
CONTACT.

GET
READY TO PLAY
SOLDIER.

FOUR HOURS, AND NOTHING BUT
FALSE ALARMS. INTERRUPTED
TWO BURGLARS AND
ONE WOULD-BE PURSE SNATCHER.

THIS FEELS DIFFERENT.
A SCREAM, FILLED WITH
UNBELIEVABLE PANIC.

(MOTHER
OF GOD! HELP!
CHRIST HELP
ME!)

TIME TO
GET BACK
TO WORK.



THIS TIME, IT'S NO
MERE STREET CRIME.



THE CLOSER
I GET, I CAN
FEEL IT.



LIKE STANDING
TOO CLOSE TO
A GENERATOR.



THERE'S SOMETHING
BAD HERE. SOMETHING
OLD, AND EVIL, AND
REEKING OF BRIMSTONE.



(DEAR GOD, THE
DEVIL IS IN THERE! THE
DEVIL HIMSELF FATHER
SON HOLY SPIRIT
PROTECT ME--)*

ALLEY,
NORTHWEST
CORNER. CIVILIAN
PRESENT, SO
TRY NOT TO
KILL HER.

*TRANSLATED FROM ITALIAN--J.R.



SOMETHING
FROM HELL.

ACKNOWLEDGED.
MOVING IN TO
STAGING POSITION.
90 SECONDS TO
WEAPONS FREE.



SOMETHING
I'M GOING TO
PUT THE FEAR
OF GOD INTO.

TAKE YOUR
TIME.



I EXPECT
IT'LL BE OVER
BY THEN.



I KNOW
YOU'RE
HERE.

splish

splish

splish



I CAN
FEEL YOU
WATCHING
ME.

SHOW
YOURSELF.



AS YOU WISH,
HELLCHILD.



AS YOU WISH.



NAIL TEAM,
GET THE CIVILIAN
CLEAR. NOW.

WHAT?
SAY AGAIN?
WE NEED A
SITREP--



FIRST, THE
SMELL OF
BLOOD.



FUMPP

THEN THE SHARP
CRACK OF BONE
AS THE POOR,
FRAGILE CREATURE
IS WRENCHED BY
AN UNSEEN HAND.



THE STENCH OF
SULPHUR AND
BRIMSTONE GROWS
STRONGER.



AND STRONGER.



FILLING THE
ALLEY...

...WITH THE ACRID
STENCH OF HELL
ON EARTH.

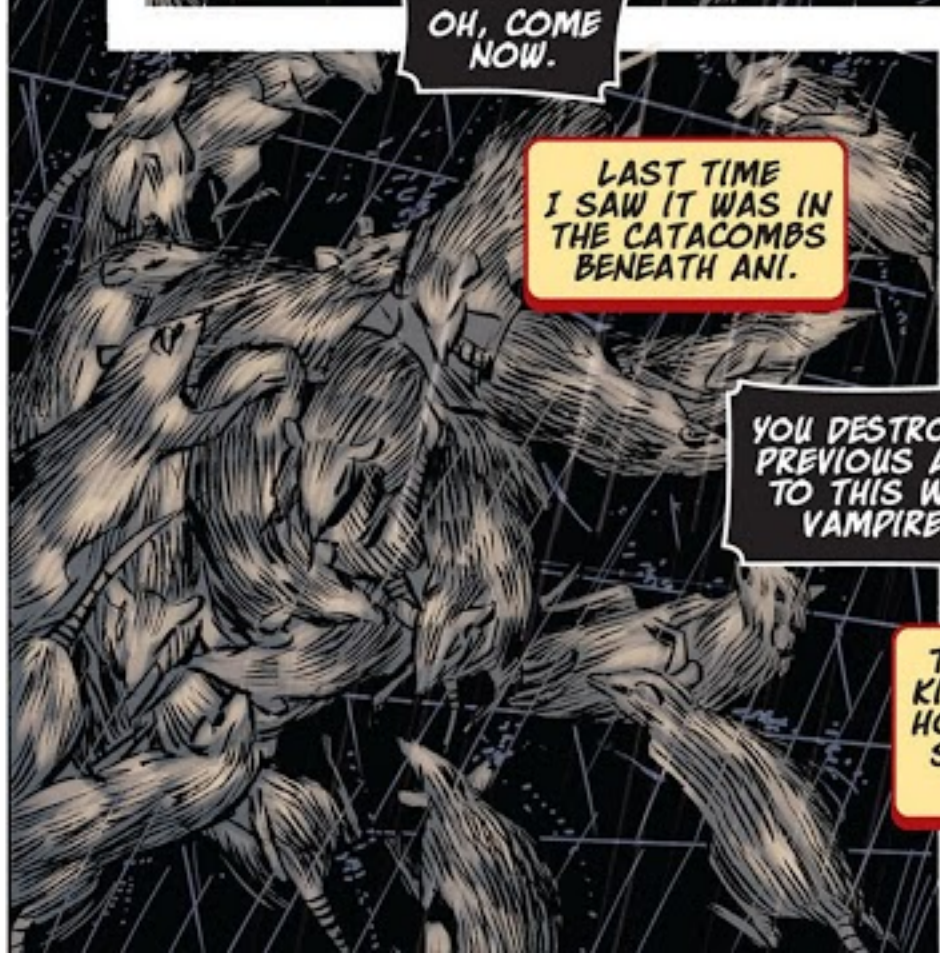


WE HAVE SOME
ACCOUNTS TO
SETTLE, DON'T WE,
VAMPIRELLA?



DEMONS ARE PROTECTIVE
OF THEIR TRUE NAMES,
AND THIS ONE DIDN'T
REVEAL MUCH THE LAST
TIME WE MET.

OH, COME
NOW.



LAST TIME
I SAW IT WAS IN
THE CATACOMBS
BENEATH ANI.



YOU DESTROYED MY
PREVIOUS ANCHOR
TO THIS WORLD,
VAMPIRELLA.

THE LAST TIME I
KILLED IT'S LIVING
HOST AND SENT IT
SCREAMING BACK
TO HELL.

YOU DIDN'T THINK
I'D LEARN FROM
THAT ENCOUNTER?



THEY'RE DAMN GOOD, HAWKING AND HIS MEN.

CRISWELL ALWAYS SMELLS VAGUELY OF SANDALWOOD. SCHULD, OF SCHNAPPS AND STALE CIGARETTES.

BUT THERE'S NO HINT OF THE SOLDIERS' APPROACH. NO TELLTALE SCENT OF COLOGNE, NO BAD BREATH, OR SWEAT.



BUT FOR ALL THEIR STEALTH...

(MOVE AWAY, MADAM. GO HOME, WHERE YOU'LL BE SAFE.)

(AND IF YOU'RE OF A MIND TO, SAY A PRAYER FOR US.)

(OF COURSE, YOUNG MAN...)



...THEY'RE STILL ONLY HUMAN.

(...THERE'S ALWAYS TIME FOR A LITTLE PRAYER.)



THEY ARE JUST CRUDE FLESH AND BLOOD...


TIME FOR YOU TO PLAY YOUR PART, BROTHER.




...STANDING AGAINST THE MACHINATIONS OF HELL.

AND SOON, IT WILL BE GRIGORY'S TIME TO TAKE THE STAGE.





DEMONS RARELY ACT SO DIRECTLY. TRICKERY AND SUBTERFUGE ARE THEIR NORMAL MODUS OPERANDI.



THEY'RE VULNERABLE ON THE PHYSICAL PLANE, SO THEY PREFER TO CONVINCE HUMANS TO DAMN THEMSELVES.


IF YOU'RE UP TO IT.

THEN LET'S HIT IT WITH SOMETHING A LITTLE BIGGER.



THAT'S ALL PART OF THE FUN FOR THEM.

HELL, YES.




FOR A DEMON TO ENGAGE IN OVERT PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION MEANS THAT THE RULES ARE CHANGING.

EXCEPT IN ONE IMPORTANT RESPECT:



THEY CAN BURN.



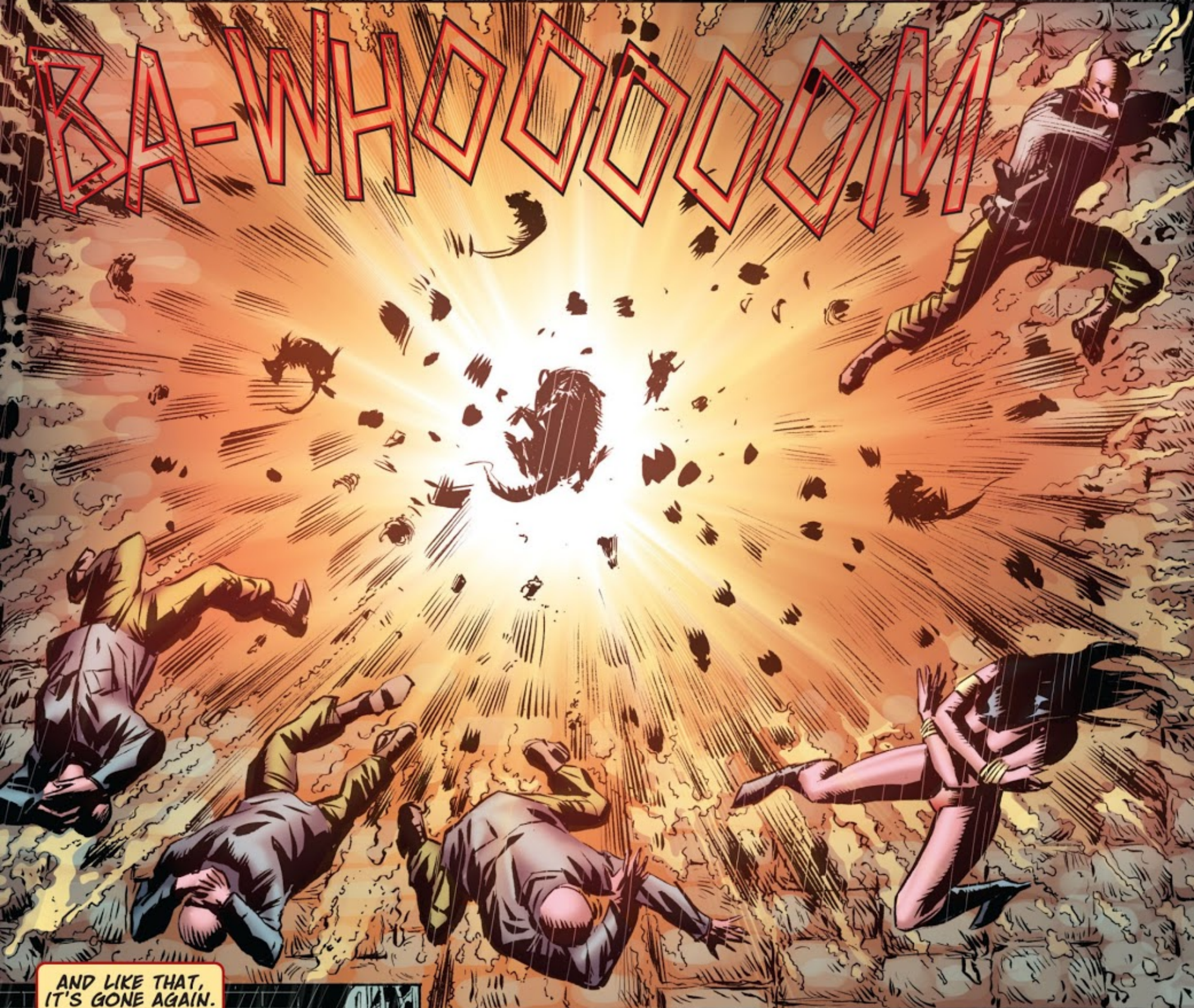
THEY CAN BLEED.

TING



THEY CAN
BREAK.

SHLUKKKK



AND LIKE THAT,
IT'S GONE AGAIN.

LIKE SCUM DOWN
A SEWAGE DRAIN.

YOUR
MEN OKAY,
HAWKING?

WE'VE SEEN
WORSE.

BUT I'VE
NEVER SEEN
THIS.

AN ALLEY?

IT'S THE VATICAN,
VAMPIRELLA. CESTUS
DEI HAS EVERY CRYPT,
EVERY TUNNEL, EVERY
STREET MAPPED.

EVERYTHING
EXCEPT THIS
ONE.

THE BLAST
OPENED UP A
HOLE THAT JUST
SHOULDN'T BE
HERE.

A COINCIDENCE, PERHAPS, OR AN INVITATION TO A TRAP.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANT TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM HUMANS, THEY ALWAYS FIND A WAY TO SURPRISE ME.

YOU SHOULD STAY BEHIND.

IN EITHER CASE, HAWKING DOESN'T SAY A WORD. HE JUST FOLLOWS ME IN, WITH NO HESITATION.

RIGHT. BECAUSE THAT SEEMS LIKELY.

AS YOU WISH, HAWKING...

SUCH BRAVERY IN THE FACE OF INCALCULABLE, BOTTOMLESS EVIL.

...BUT I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET THAT DECISION.





IT'S NOT MY FIRST DANCE.

I'VE SEEN THIS KIND OF SARCOPHAGUS BEFORE.

IN THE CRYPTS BELOW A DECONSECRATED CHURCH IN SEATTLE.



IF THIS IS WHAT I THINK IT IS, BE READY.



THE NIGHT I MET SOFIA, IN THE HEART OF A NEST OF VAMPIRES.

BECAUSE THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET A LOT WORSE.

RRRRRRUMMBLE



VAMPIRES THAT WEREN'T QUITE VAMPIRES ANYMORE.

MOTHER OF GOD...



MONSTERS TWISTED INTO SOMETHING DARKER, OLDER, BURNING WITH A HUNGER IMPOSSIBLE TO SATE.

NOT QUITE.

YOU. AT LAST.

THAT SCENT, IMPOSSIBLE
TO FORGET. LAVENDER AND
DUST AND ROTTING MEAT.

ONCE, THE CHOSEN
FAVORITE OF DRACULA
HIMSELF, HIS RED
RIGHT HAND.

THEN, A WOULD-BE
USURPER TO DRACULA'S
RULE OF THE KINGDOM
OF VAMPIRES.

THE JILTED BRIDE OF
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS,
A PREHISTORIC GOD
OF HUNGER.

HELLO,
LE FANU.

VAMPIRELLA.
MY MURDERER.

THE OLD
SAYING IS
TRUE...

...GOOD
THINGS DO
COME TO SHE
WHO WAITS.

TO BE
CONTINUED

VAMPIRELLA



Revaux
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DYNAMITE
19

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NAIL TEAM,
CONTACT
FRONT!

UNDERGROUND.
AGAIN.

ANOTHER MOLDY
CRYPT.



ANOTHER HORROR,
ENRAGED AND IN
THE THROES OF
BLOODLUST.

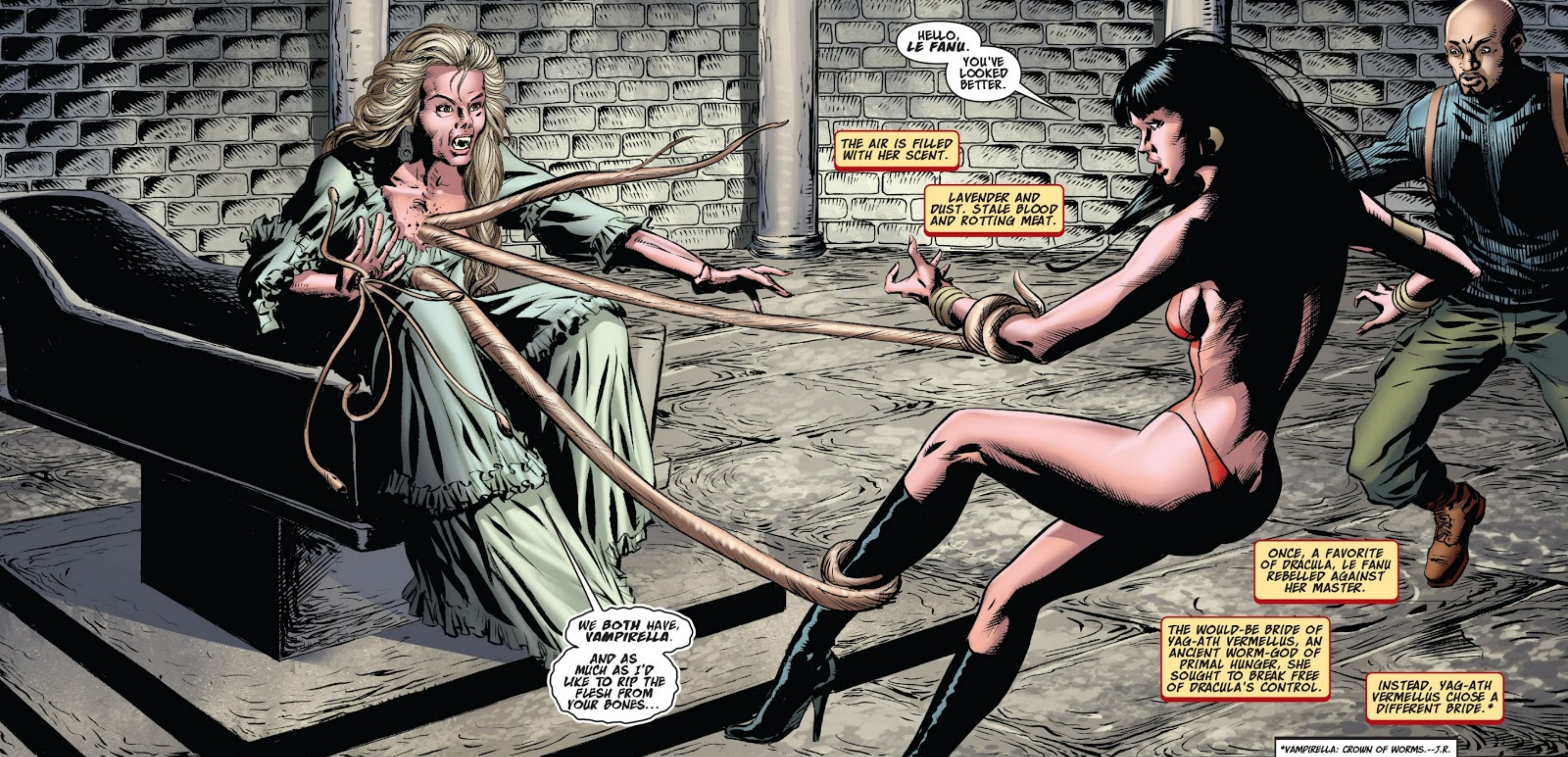
HOLD
YOUR FIRE,
SOLDIER.

YOU'D THINK
BY NOW I'D
KNOW BETTER:

NOTHING GOOD
EVER HAPPENS
UNDERGROUND.



I NEED
TO GREET AN
OLD FRIEND.



HELLO,
LE FANU.
YOU'VE
LOOKED
BETTER.

THE AIR IS FILLED
WITH HER SCENT.

LAVENDER AND
DUST. STALE BLOOD
AND ROTTING MEAT.

ONCE, A FAVORITE
OF DRACULA, LE FANU
REBELLED AGAINST
HER MASTER.

THE WOULD-BE BRIDE OF
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS, AN
ANCIENT WORM-GOD OF
PRIMAL HUNGER, SHE
SOUGHT TO BREAK FREE
OF DRACULA'S CONTROL.

INSTEAD, YAG-ATH
VERMELLUS CHOSE A
DIFFERENT BRIDE.*

WE BOTH HAVE,
VAMPIRELLA.
AND AS
MUCH AS I'D
LIKE TO RIP THE
FLESH FROM
YOUR BONES...

*VAMPIRELLA: CROWN OF WORMS...-J.R.



TARGET
CONTACT,
FIRE ON MY
ORDER--



?!



I'M NOT
HERE TO FIGHT
YOU.



YOU LEFT
ME TO ROT.

YOU LEFT ME
FOR DEAD.

IT HAS
TAKEN MORE
THAN A YEAR.

IT HAS
TAKEN ALL MY
STRENGTH...

...TO RETURN
THE FAVOR.

KEEP
VAMPIRELLA
DESPAIR.
BECAUSE
SOON...

...YOU'LL
WISH YOU'D
DIED IN
SEATTLE.





SHE'S CRUMBLING,
LIKE OLD LEAVES.

WHATEVER IT WAS THAT HAD
KEPT HER GOING, THAT HAD
KNITTED HER BACK TOGETHER,
IS GONE NOW.

HM.
YOU HAVE
INTERESTING
FRIENDS.

THAT SOUNDED
LIKE A WARNING.
SHE SEEM LIKE THE
TYPE TO GIVE YOU
A HEADS-UP?



ALL THAT HATE, ALL THAT RAGE...

SO.
A TRAP?

A TRAP.



...ALL FEEL LIKE
AN ECHO OF MY
OWN SINS.

GET THEM
MOVING RIGHT
NOW.

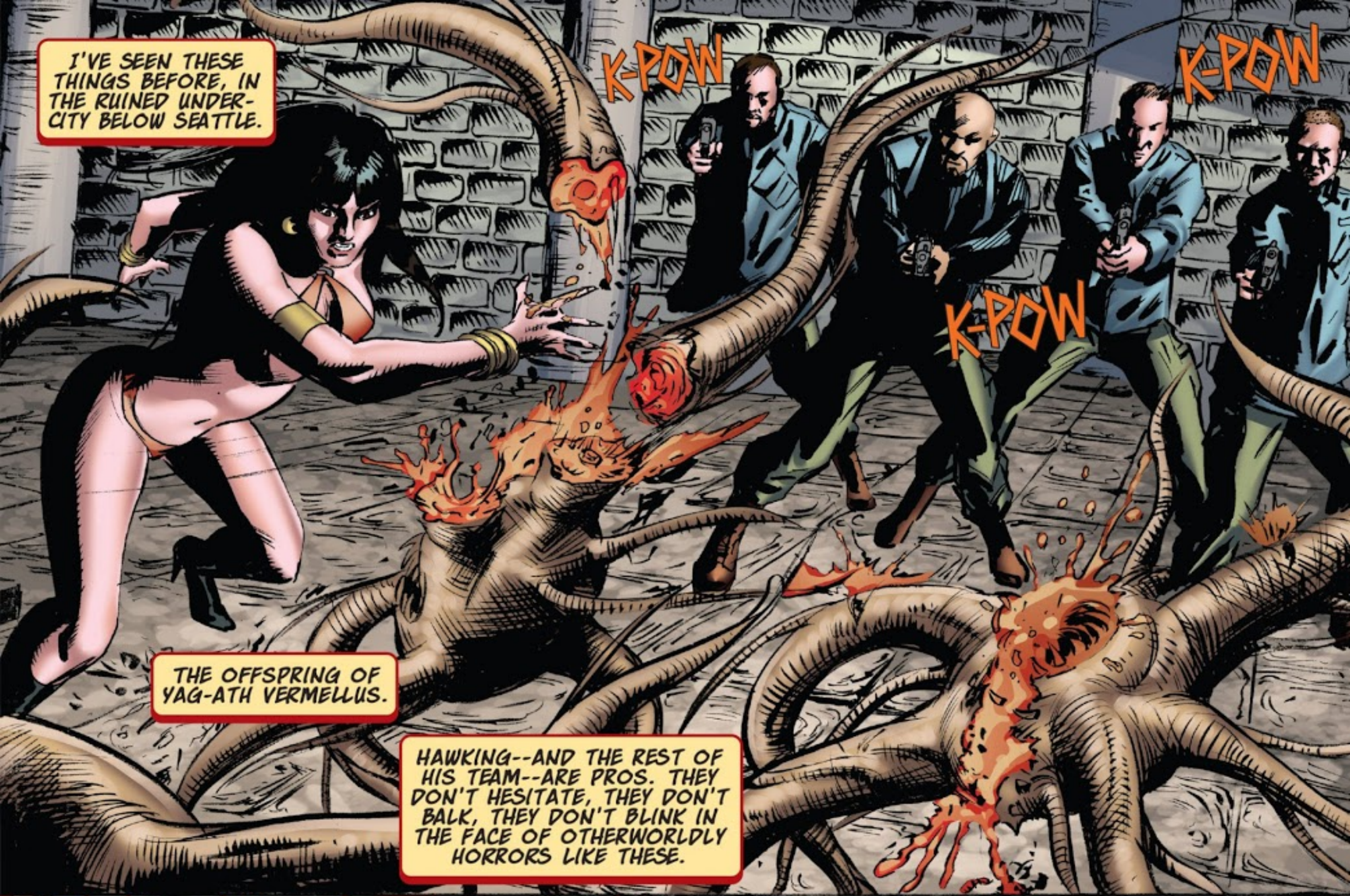


KRRRAK



BEFORE
WE'RE ALL
OUT OF
TIME.

I'VE SEEN THESE THINGS BEFORE, IN THE RUINED UNDER-CITY BELOW SEATTLE.



THE OFFSPRING OF YAG-ATH VERMELLUS.

HAWKING--AND THE REST OF HIS TEAM--ARE PROS. THEY DON'T HESITATE, THEY DON'T BALK, THEY DON'T BLINK IN THE FACE OF OTHERWORLDLY HORRORS LIKE THESE.

THEY JUST STAND THEIR GROUND WHEN THE GATES OF HELL SWING OPEN.



TOO EASY.



WASN'T TOO BAD.

NO. IT WASN'T. THAT'S WHAT WORRIES ME.

IT ALL FEELS WRONG, LIKE THE MOMENT BEFORE THE STORM BREAKS AND THE LIGHTNING STRIKES BEGIN.



IT'S TOO... CLEAN.



THANK YOU, VAMPIRELLA. IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO HAVE LOOSE ENDS TIED UP.

OH NO.

"OH NO?"

I'D HOPED
FOR A WARMER
GREETING,
HELLCHILD.
STILL...

VLAD
DRACULA.

THE LORD OF
VAMPIRES.

THE WELLSPRING OF ALL
THE BLOOD-DRENCHED
LEGENDS, THE WORST
TO PREY ON HAPLESS
HUMANS LOST ON
MOONLIT STREETS.

THE IMPOSSIBLE
MONSTER DOING
THE IMPOSSIBLE.

WALKING IN
DAYLIGHT.

...YOU NEVER
FAIL TO BRING
A SMILE TO
MY FACE.

THEY'RE WELL TRAINED. CONTROLLING THEIR EMOTIONS, MASTERING THEIR FEAR.

YOU WON'T BE SMILING FOR LONG--

WAIT.

YOU AND YOUR MEN ARE GOOD, HAWKING, BUT YOU'RE NOT READY FOR HIM.

I KNOW WHO--AND WHAT--HE IS. AND WE'RE TRAINED TO HANDLE HIS KIND.

BUT I CAN HEAR THE POUNDING OF THEIR HEARTS. I CAN ALMOST TASTE THE BLAST OF ADRENALINE THAT SURGES THROUGH THEIR VEINS.

HA HA HA HA!

OF COURSE YOU ARE. COME THEN, HOLY MAN.

"HANDLE" ME.

THEIR WEAPONS ARE BLESSED. THEIR BULLETS, SHOT THROUGH WITH PURIFIED SILVER.

WITH THEIR SKILL, UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, HAWKING AND HIS MEN MIGHT BE CAPABLE OF HURTING DRACULA.

BUT VLAD IS WALKING AROUND IN SUNSHINE WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE.

WE'RE AS FAR FROM NORMAL AS WE CAN GET.

STOP.

NAIL TEAM:

TAKE HIM.

THEY'RE STILL ONLY
HUMAN, AFTER ALL.

SNAP

...TIME JUST
STANDS STILL.

IT TAKES LESS THAN A SECOND,
BEFORE THEIR FINGERS TIGHTEN
ON THE TRIGGERS...

IT TAKES AN EYEBLINK,
AND THE ALLEY
BECOMES A KILL ZONE.

AND ALL HELL
BREAKS LOOSE.

K-POW
K-POW



TWO EYEBLINKS, AND THE FIGHT BEGINS TO TURN AGAINST MY ALLIES.

BEFORE THE THIRD EYEBLINK, AMMUNITION IS EXPENDED AND THE BATTLE BECOMES A CONTEST OF MEAT AND MUSCLE.

UNFORTUNATE.

IN THE END, FOR ALL THEIR SKILLS, THEY'RE STILL HUMAN.

TWO EYEBLINKS, AND THE FIGHT BEGINS TO TURN AGAINST MY ALLIES.

BEFORE THE THIRD EYEBLINK, AMMUNITION IS EXPENDED AND THE BATTLE BECOMES A CONTEST OF MEAT AND MUSCLE.

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UNFORTUNATE.

IN THE END, FOR ALL THEIR SKILLS, THEY'RE STILL HUMAN.



WHAT IS IT
YOU WANT,
VLAD?



YOUR
ATTENTION.



YOU'VE
GOT IT.

IF HISTORY
IS ANY EXAMPLE,
THOUGH...



...THAT
DOESN'T WORK
OUT TOO WELL
FOR YOU.



ENOUGH
CAT-AND-MOUSE
GAMES.

IT'S ME
YOU WANT.

IT'S
ALWAYS
ME YOU
WANT.



I'M NOT
SURE **WHAT** YOUR
MOST HUMAN TRAIT
IS, LITTLE GIRL.

YOUR LACK OF
PATIENCE, OR YOUR
LACK OF ATTENTION
TO **DETAIL**.



MY NEW CHILDREN COULD'VE ATTACKED YOU, TOO.

THEY DIDN'T.

INSTEAD, THEY'VE SUBDUED YOUR "ALLIES."



THE GOOD AND HOLY MEN, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS, WHO WOULD'VE HAPPILY KILLED YOUR FRIEND, SOFIA.*

AND THESE INNOCENTS ARE SAFE. FOR THE MOMENT.

*SEE VAMPIRELLA #16-17.--J.R.



I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE, HOWEVER.

DAYLIGHT, A PUBLIC SQUARE FILLED WITH TERRIFIED, SQUEALING PEOPLE FACING PAINFUL DEATH?

I'VE MISSED THIS.



ALL RIGHT, VLAD. I'LL BITE.

YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT DETAILS? LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR NEW ABILITY TO SOAK UP THE SUN.



PATIENCE.
ALL THINGS
TO SHE WHO
WAITS.

I KNOW A THING OR
TWO ABOUT **WAITING**,
AFTER ALL. CENTURIES
CONFINED TO SHADOWS,
TO CRYPTS AND CAVES
AND DARKENED CELLARS.
LIKE A **WORM**.



I KNEW
IT WOULD TAKE
PURE, RAW
POWER TO STEP
FROM THE
SHADOWS.

ANCIENT,
GODLIKE
POWER.

LIKE THAT
OF YAG-ATH
VERMELLUS.



BUT YOU
CAN'T JUST
HARNESS THAT
POWER.

ALLIANCES
MUST BE STRUCK.
PACTS MADE.



LIKE THE
ONE I NEARLY
STRUCK.

THE ONE YOU
DISRUPTED.

I'D BEEN
A PAWN IN THE
STRUGGLE
BETWEEN ORDER
AND CHAOS.

BUT AFTER
YEARS OF BEING
CRUSHED BETWEEN
THE GEARS, I LEARNED
SOMETHING.
SOMETHING NEITHER
SIDE WANTED ME
TO KNOW.

ORDER
AND CHAOS
WERE NOT THE
ONLY GAMES
IN TOWN.

THERE
WERE OLDER,
STRANGER
FORCES AT
PLAY.



AND
ONCE I LEARNED
OF THEIR
EXISTENCE...



...ALL MANNER
OF THINGS BECAME
POSSIBLE. FOR
A PRICE.



GODS
OF HATE.

OF SORROW.

OF FEAR.

OF
BOTTOMLESS
HUNGER.

ALL EAGER
TO CLAW THEIR
WAY BACK INTO
OUR WORLD AND
CAST IT BACK INTO
PRIMAL SAVAGERY
AND DEATH.

I CHOSE YOU,
VAMPIRELLA, AS THE
BRIDE OF YAG-ATH
VERMELLUS, EVEN
OVER MY BELOVED
LE FANU.

DID YOU
EVER WONDER
WHY?



I'M GOING TO ASSUME IT'S THE **OUTFIT**.

BECAUSE YOU ALWAYS **WIN**.



EVERY SCHEME. EVERY PLOT. EVERY TIME DEMONS BREAK FREE FROM HELL, YOU DEFEAT THEM.

GHOSTS. VAMPIRES. WEREWOLVES. SERIAL KILLERS. THE KERASU SHIMEI.

YOU'VE **ALWAYS** BEATEN ALL COMERS.



NO. DARK MOTHER, DON'T LET HIM.

THOUGH YOUR HUMAN COMPANIONS USUALLY PAY A STEEP PRICE FOR YOUR VICTORIES.

IF I MOVE, I'LL NEVER REACH HIM IN TIME.



DON'T THEY?



VLAD'S...CREATURES WILL KILL THEM ALL BEFORE I CAN GET MY HANDS ON HIM.

DAMN YOU, VLAD.

DON'T DO THIS.



ANOTHER VICTIM
OF YOUR THIRST
FOR CONQUEST.

YOU HAVE
NO IDEA
WHAT I
CAN DO.



ANOTHER MONSTER,
BORN IN YOUR WAKE.

NNNNFH



NNNNGNGGGGAH!



SHHHHH LUCK

HHUUURR

RRRGHKKK!



THE SCREAMS
QUICKLY GIVE WAY
TO THE WET SOUND
OF TEARING MEAT.

IT PROBABLY
TAKES NO
MORE THAN
TWO OR THREE
SECONDS.

SHHHLLLUCK



IT JUST FEELS
LIKE AN ETERNITY.



HFFFF

--THY ROD
AND THY STAFF,
THEY COMFORT
ME--



--SURELY
GOODNESS AND
MERCY SHALL
FOLLOW ME ALL
THE DAYS OF
MY LIFE--



--AND I WILL DWELL
IN THE HOUSE OF THE
LORD FOREVER.

BUT YOU
FIRST.

BLAM



GO GO
GO!





IT'S ALL ABOUT
TIME NOW. A
RACE AGAINST
THE INEVITABLE.

BLAM
BLAM

BLAM
BLAM

IT TOOK SECONDS
FOR VLAD TO
TRANSFORM OPENA.

GET OUT
OF HERE
HAWKING!



IT TOOK SECONDS FOR THIS
SWARM OF HORRORS TO SUBDUE
HAWKING AND HIS TEAM.

SAVE YOUR
MEN!

TICKS OF THE SECOND
HAND BETWEEN LIFE
AND DEATH.



NAIL TWO, NAIL
THREE, EXFIL
NOW!



FOR ALL
OF THEM.

SHOULD'VE
GONE WITH
THEM.

PROBABLY.

KLICK



GOT ANY
IDEAS?



I'M GOING TO STICK WITH KILLING EVERYTHING I CAN AND PRAYING A LOT.

IT'S A LOST CAUSE.

I KNOW IT.



I CAN'T SAVE THEM ALL.

I COULDN'T SAVE ADAM.



I COULDN'T SAVE SOFIA.



I COULDN'T SAVE HAWKING'S MAN, OPENA.

BUT I PROMISE YOU, VLAD:

IF THEY HAD TO DIE,
I'M GOING TO MAKE
SURE THAT YOU GO
WITH THEM.

ALL THESE
YEARS...

GGKKKK

...AND YOU STILL
HAVEN'T LEARNED
TO BE POLITE.

YOU JUST DON'T
UNDERSTAND.

THESE CREATURES
I CAN MAKE AT WILL,
MY NEWFOUND STRENGTH,
MY ABILITY TO WALK IN
DAYLIGHT AFTER SO VERY
MANY LONG, COLD
YEARS...

...I OWE
IT ALL TO
YOU.

TO BE
CONTINUED